



Peter

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

PART II

THE CAPTIVE

*“When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past.....”*

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

is a translation of the eight-volume work,
A la Recherche du Temps Perdu, by Marcel Proust,
grouped in this four-volume edition as follows :

I

- I. *Du Côté de Chez Swann*
Swann's Way
II. *A l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs*
Within a Budding Grove

II

- III. *Le Côté de Guermantes (I)*
IV. *Le Côté de Guermantes (II)*
The Guermantes Way
Sodome et Gomorrhe (I)
Cities of the Plain (I)

III

- V. *Sodome et Gomorrhe (II)*
Cities of the Plain (II)
VI. *La Prisonnière*
The Captive

IV

- VII. *Albertine Disparue*
The Sweet Cheat Gone
VIII. *Le Temps Retrouvé*
The Past Recaptured

MARCEL PROUST

CITIES
OF THE PLAIN

VOLUME TWO

TRANSLATED BY C. K. SCOTT MONCRIEFF

THE
CAPTIVE

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CITIES OF THE PLAIN: PART II

Chapter II (continued) page 1

The pleasures of M. Nissim Bernard (continued).—Outline of the strange character of Morel.—M. de Charlus dines with the Verdurins.

Chapter III page 173

The sorrows of M. de Charlus.—His sham duel.—The stations on the "Transatlantic".—Weary of Albertine, I decide to break with her.

Chapter IV page 359

Sudden revulsion in favour of Albertine.—Agony at sunrise.—I set off at once with Albertine for Paris.

CHAPTER II (*continued*)

The pleasures of M. Nissim Bernard (*continued*)—Outline of the strange character of Morel—M. de Charlus dines with the Verdurins.

WE were waiting, Albertine and I, at the Balbec station of the little local railway. We had driven there in the hotel omnibus, because it was raining. Not far away from us was M. Nissim Bernard, with a black eye. He had recently forsaken the chorister from *Athalie* for the waiter at a much frequented farmhouse in the neighbourhood, known as the "Cherry Orchard." This rubicund youth, with his blunt features, appeared for all the world to have a tomato instead of a head. A tomato exactly similar served as head to his twin brother. To the detached observer there is this attraction about these perfect resemblances between pairs of twins, that nature, becoming for the moment industrialised, seems to be offering a pattern for sale. Unfortunately M. Nissim Bernard looked at it from another point of view, and this resemblance was only external. Tomato II shewed a frenzied zeal in furnishing the pleasures exclusively of ladies, Tomato I did not mind condescending to meet the wishes of certain gentlemen. Now on each occasion when, stirred, as though by a reflex action, by the memory of pleasant hours spent with Tomato I, M. Bernard presented himself at the Cherry Orchard, being short-sighted (not that one need be short-sighted to mistake them), the old Israelite, unconsciously

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

playing Amphitryon, would accost the twin brother with: "Will you meet me somewhere this evening?" He at once received a resounding smack in the face. It might even be repeated in the course of a single meal, when he continued with the second brother the conversation he had begun with the first. In the end this treatment so disgusted him, by association of ideas, with tomatoes, even of the edible variety, that whenever he heard a new-comer order that vegetable, at the next table to his own, in the Grand Hotel, he would murmur to him: "You must excuse me, Sir, for addressing you, without an introduction. But I heard you order tomatoes. They are stale to-day. I tell you in your own interest, for it makes no difference to me, I never touch them myself." The stranger would reply with effusive thanks to this philanthropic and disinterested neighbour, call back the waiter, pretend to have changed his mind: "No, on second thoughts, certainly not, no tomatoes." Aimé, who had seen it all before, would laugh to himself, and think: "He's an old rascal, that Monsieur Bernard, he's gone and made another of them change his order." M. Bernard, as he waited for the already overdue tram, shewed no eagerness to speak to Albertine and myself, because of his black eye. We were even less eager to speak to him. It would however have been almost inevitable if, at that moment, a bicycle had not come dashing towards us; the lift-boy sprang from its saddle, breathless. Madame Verdurin had telephoned shortly after we left the hotel, to know whether I would dine with her two days later; we shall see presently why. Then, having given me the message in detail, the lift-boy left us, and, being one of these democratic "employees" who affect

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

independence with regard to the middle classes, and among themselves restore the principle of authority, explained: "I must be off, because of my chiefs."

Albertine's girl friends had gone, and would be away for some time. I was anxious to provide her with distractions. Even supposing that she might have found some happiness in spending the afternoons with no company but my own, at Balbec, I knew that such happiness is never complete, and that Albertine, being still at the age (which some of us never outgrow) when we have not yet discovered that this imperfection resides in the person who receives the happiness and not in the person who gives it, might have been tempted to put her disappointment down to myself. I preferred that she should impute it to circumstances which, arranged by myself, would not give us an opportunity of being alone together, while at the same time preventing her from remaining in the casino and on the beach without me. And so I had asked her that day to come with me to Doncières, where I was going to meet Saint-Loup. With a similar hope of occupying her mind, I advised her to take up painting, in which she had had lessons in the past. While working she would not ask herself whether she was happy or unhappy. I would gladly have taken her also to dine now and again with the Verdurins and the Cambremers, who certainly would have been delighted to see any friend introduced by myself, but I must first make certain that Mme. Putbus was not yet at la Raspelière. It was only by going there in person that I could make sure of this, and, as I knew beforehand that on the next day but one Albertine would be going on a visit with her aunt, I had seized this opportunity to send Mme. Verdurin a tele-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

gram asking her whether she would be at home upon Wednesday. If Mme. Putbus was there, I would manage to see her maid, ascertain whether there was any danger of her coming to Balbec, and if so find out when, so as to take Albertine out of reach on the day. The little local railway, making a loop which did not exist at the time when I had taken it with my grandmother, now extended to Doncières-la-Goupil, a big station at which important trains stopped, among them the express by which I had come down to visit Saint-Loup, from Paris, and the corresponding express by which I had returned. And, because of the bad weather, the omnibus from the Grand Hotel took Albertine and myself to the station of the little tram, Balbec-Plage.

The little train had not yet arrived, but one could see, lazy and slow, the plume of smoke that it had left in its wake, which, confined now to its own power of locomotion as an almost stationary cloud, was slowly mounting the green slope of the cliff of Criquetot. Finally the little tram, which it had preceded by taking a vertical course, arrived in its turn, at a leisurely crawl. The passengers who were waiting to board it stepped back to make way for it, but without hurrying, knowing that they were dealing with a good-natured, almost human traveller, who, guided like the bicycle of a beginner, by the obliging signals of the station-master, in the strong hands of the engine-driver, was in no danger of running over anybody, and would come to a halt at the proper place.

My telegram explained the Verdurins' telephone message and had been all the more opportune since Wednesday (the day I had fixed happened to be a Wednesday) was the day set apart for dinner-parties by Mme. Ver-

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

durin, at la Raspelière, as in Paris, a fact of which I was unaware. Mme. Verdurin did not give "dinners," but she had "Wednesdays." These Wednesdays were works of art. While fully conscious that they had not their match anywhere, Mme. Verdurin introduced shades of distinction between them. "Last Wednesday was not as good as the one before," she would say. "But I believe the next will be one of the best I have ever given." Sometimes she went so far as to admit: "This Wednesday was not worthy of the others. But I have a big surprise for you next week." In the closing weeks of the Paris season, before leaving for the country, the Mistress would announce the end of the Wednesdays. It gave her an opportunity to stimulate the faithful. "There are only three more Wednesdays left, there are only two more," she would say, in the same tone as though the world were coming to an end. "You aren't going to miss next Wednesday, for the finale." But this finale was a sham, for she would announce: "Officially, there will be no more Wednesdays. To-day was the last for this year. But I shall be at home all the same on Wednesday. We shall have a little Wednesday to ourselves; I dare say these little private Wednesdays will be the nicest of all." At la Raspelière, the Wednesdays were of necessity restricted, and since, if they had discovered a friend who was passing that way, they would invite him for one or another evening, almost every day of the week became a Wednesday. "I don't remember all the guests, but I know there's Madame la Marquise de Camembert," the lift-boy had told me; his memory of our discussion of the name Cambremer had not succeeded in definitely supplanting that of the old word, whose syllables, familiar

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

and full of meaning, came to the young employee's rescue when he was embarrassed by this difficult name, and were immediately preferred and readopted by him, not by any means from laziness or as an old and ineradicable usage, but because of the need for logic and clarity which they satisfied.

We hastened in search of an empty carriage in which I could hold Albertine in my arms throughout the journey. Having failed to find one, we got into a compartment in which there was already installed a lady with a massive face, old and ugly, with a masculine expression, very much in her Sunday best, who was reading the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Notwithstanding her commonness, she was eclectic in her tastes, and I found amusement in asking myself to what social category she could belong; I at once concluded that she must be the manager of some large brothel, a procuress on holiday. Her face, her manner, proclaimed the fact aloud. Only, I had never yet supposed that such ladies read the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Albertine drew my attention to her with a wink and a smile. The lady wore an air of extreme dignity; and as I, for my part, bore within me the consciousness that I was invited, two days later, to the terminal point of the little railway, by the famous Mme. Verdurin, that at an intermediate station I was awaited by Robert de Saint-Loup, and that a little farther on I had it in my power to give great pleasure to Mme. de Cambremer, by going to stay at Féterne, my eyes sparkled with irony as I studied this self-important lady who seemed to think that, because of her elaborate attire, the feathers in her hat, her *Revue des Deux Mondes*, she was a more considerable personage than myself. I hoped that the lady

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

would not remain in the train much longer than M. Nissim Bernard, and that she would alight at least at Toutainville, but no. The train stopped at Evreville, she remained seated. Similarly at Montmartin-sur-Mer, at Parville-la-Bingard, at Incarville, so that in despair, when the train had left Saint-Frichoux, which was the last station before Doncières, I began to embrace Albertine without bothering about the lady. At Doncières, Saint-Loup had come to meet me at the station, with the greatest difficulty, he told me, for, as he was staying with his aunt, my telegram had only just reached him and he could not, having been unable to make any arrangements beforehand, spare me more than an hour of his time. This hour seemed to me, alas, far too long, for as soon as we had left the train Albertine devoted her whole attention to Saint-Loup. She never talked to me, barely answered me if I addressed her, repulsed me when I approached her. With Robert, on the other hand, she laughed her provoking laugh, talked to him volubly, played with the dog he had brought with him, and, as she excited the animal, deliberately rubbed against its master. I remembered that, on the day when Albertine had allowed me to kiss her for the first time, I had had a smile of gratitude for the unknown seducer who had wrought so profound a change in her and had so far simplified my task. I thought of him now with horror. Robert must have noticed that I was not unconcerned about Albertine, for he offered no response to her provocations, which made her extremely annoyed with myself; then he spoke to me as though I had been alone, which, when she realised it, raised me again in her esteem. Robert asked me if I would not like to meet those of his

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

friends with whom he used to make me dine every evening at Doncières, when I was staying there, who were still in the garrison. And as he himself adopted that irritating manner which he rebuked in others: "What is the good of your having worked so hard to *charm* them if you don't want to see them again?" I declined his offer, for I did not wish to run any risk of being parted from Albertine, but also because now I was detached from them. From them, which is to say from myself. We passionately long that there may be another life in which we shall be similar to what we are here below. But we do not pause to reflect that, even without waiting for that other life, in this life, after a few years we are unfaithful to what we have been, to what we wished to remain immortally. Even without supposing that death is to alter us more completely than the changes that occur in the course of a lifetime, if in that other life we were to encounter the self that we have been, we should turn away from ourself as from those people with whom we were once on friendly terms but whom we have not seen for years—such as Saint-Loup's friends whom I used so much to enjoy meeting again every evening at the Faisan Doré, and whose conversation would now have seemed to me merely a boring importunity. In this respect, and because I preferred not to go there in search of what had pleased me there in the past, a stroll through Doncières might have seemed to me a prefiguration of an arrival in Paradise. We dream much of Paradise, or rather of a number of successive Paradises, but each of them is, long before we die, a Paradise lost, in which we should feel ourself lost also.

He left us at the station. "But you may have about

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

an hour to wait," he told me. "If you spend it here, you will probably see my uncle Charlus, who is going by the train to Paris, ten minutes before yours. I have said good-bye to him already, because I have to go back before his train starts. I didn't tell him about you, because I hadn't got your telegram." To the reproaches which I heaped upon Albertine when Saint-Loup had left us, she replied that she had intended, by her coldness towards me, to destroy any idea that he might have formed if, at the moment when the train stopped, he had seen me leaning against her with my arm round her waist. He had indeed noticed this attitude (I had not caught sight of him, otherwise I should have adopted one that was more correct), and had had time to murmur in my ear: "So that's how it is, one of those priggish little girls you told me about, who wouldn't go near Mlle. de Stermaria because they thought her fast?" I had indeed mentioned to Robert, and in all sincerity, when I went down from Paris to visit him at Doncières, and when we were talking about our time at Balbec, that there was nothing to be had from Albertine, that she was the embodiment of virtue. And now that I had long since discovered for myself that this was false, I was even more anxious that Robert should believe it to be true. It would have been sufficient for me to tell Robert that I was in love with Albertine. He was one of those people who are capable of denying themselves a pleasure to spare their friend sufferings which they would feel even more keenly if they themselves were the victims. "Yes, she is still rather childish. But you don't know anything against her?" I added anxiously. "Nothing, except that I saw you clinging together like a pair of lovers."

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

"Your attitude destroyed absolutely nothing," I told Albertine when Saint-Loup had left us. "Quite true," she said to me, "it was stupid of me, I hurt your feelings, I'm far more unhappy about it than you are. You'll see, I shall never be like that again; forgive me," she pleaded, holding out her hand with a sorrowful air. At that moment, from the entrance to the waiting-room in which we were sitting, I saw advance slowly, followed at a respectful distance by a porter loaded with his baggage, M. de Charlus.

In Paris, where I encountered him only in evening dress, immobile, straitlaced in a black coat, maintained in a vertical posture by his proud aloofness, his thirst for admiration, the soar of his conversation, I had never realised how far he had aged. Now, in a light travelling suit which made him appear stouter, as he swaggered through the room, balancing a puffy stomach and an almost symbolical behind, the cruel light of day broke up into paint, upon his lips, rice-powder fixed by cold cream, on the tip of his nose, black upon his dyed moustaches whose ebon tint formed a contrast to his grizzled hair, all that by artificial light had seemed the animated colouring of a man who was still young.

While I stood talking to him, though briefly, because of his train, I kept my eye on Albertine's carriage to shew her that I was coming. When I turned my head towards M. de Charlus, he asked me to be so kind as to summon a soldier, a relative of his, who was standing on the other side of the platform, as though he were waiting to take our train, but in the opposite direction, away from Balbec. "He is in his regimental band," said M. de Charlus. "As you are so fortunate as to be still young

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

enough, and I unfortunately am old enough for you to save me the trouble of going across to him." I took it upon myself to go across to the soldier he pointed out to me, and saw from the lyres embroidered on his collar that he was a bandsman. But, just as I was preparing to execute my commission, what was my surprise, and, I may say, my pleasure, on recognising Morel, the son of my uncle's valet, who recalled to me so many memories. They made me forget to convey M. de Charlus's message. "What, you are at Doncières?" "Yes, and they've put me in the band attached to the batteries." But he made this answer in a dry and haughty tone. He had become an intense "poseur," and evidently the sight of myself, reminding him of his father's profession, was not pleasing to him. Suddenly I saw M. de Charlus descending upon us. My delay had evidently taxed his patience. "I should like to listen to a little music this evening," he said to Morel without any preliminaries, "I pay five hundred francs for the evening, which may perhaps be of interest to one of your friends, if you have any in the band." Knowing as I did the insolence of M. de Charlus, I was astonished at his not even saying how d'ye do to his young friend. The Baron did not however give me time to think. Holding out his hand in the friendliest manner: "Good-bye, my dear fellow," he said, as a hint that I might now leave them. I had, as it happened, left my dear Albertine too long alone. "D'you know," I said to her as I climbed into the carriage, "life by the sea-side, and travelling make me realise that the theatre of the world is stocked with fewer settings than actors, and with fewer actors than situations." "What makes you say that?" "Because M. de Charlus asked me just now to

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

fetch one of his friends, whom, this instant, on the platform of this station, I have just discovered to be one of my own." But as I uttered these words, I began to wonder how the Baron could have bridged the social gulf to which I had not given a thought. It occurred to me first of all that it might be through Jupien, whose niece, as the reader may remember, had seemed to shew a preference for the violinist. What did baffle me completely was that, when due to leave for Paris in five minutes, the Baron should have asked for a musical evening. But, visualising Jupien's niece again 'in my memory, I was beginning to find that "recognitions" did indeed play an important part in life, when all of a sudden the truth flashed across my mind and I realised that I had been absurdly innocent. M. de Charlus had never in his life set eyes upon Morel, nor Morel upon M. de Charlus, who, dazzled but also terrified by a warrior, albeit he bore no weapon but a lyre, had called upon me in his emotion to bring him the person whom he never suspected that I already knew. In any case, the offer of five hundred francs must have made up to Morel for the absence of any previous relations, for I saw that they continued to talk, without reflecting that they were standing close beside our tram. As I recalled the manner in which M. de Charlus had come up to Morel and myself, I saw at once the resemblance to certain of his relatives, when they picked up a woman in the street. Only the desired object had changed its sex. After a certain age, and even if different evolutions are occurring in us, the more we become ourself, the more our characteristic features are accentuated. For Nature, while harmoniously contributing the design of her tapestry, breaks the monotony of

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

the composition thanks to the variety of the intercepted forms. Besides, the arrogance with which M. de Charlus had accosted the violinist is relative, and depends upon the point of view one adopts. It would have been recognised by three out of four of the men in society who nodded their heads to him, not by the prefect of police who, a few years later, was to keep him under observation.

"The Paris train is signalled, Sir," said the porter who was carrying his luggage. "But I am not going by the train, put it in the cloakroom, damn you!" said M. de Charlus, as he gave twenty francs to the porter, astonished by the change of plan and charmed by the tip. This generosity at once attracted a flower-seller. "Buy these carnations, look, this lovely rose, kind gentlemen, it will bring you luck." M. de Charlus, out of patience, handed her a couple of francs, in exchange for which the woman gave him her blessing, and her flowers as well. "Good God, why can't she leave us alone," said M. de Charlus, addressing himself in an ironical and complaining tone, as of a man distraught, to Morel, to whom he found a certain comfort in appealing. "We've quite enough to talk about as it is." Perhaps the porter was not yet out of earshot, perhaps M. de Charlus did not care to have too numerous an audience, perhaps these incidental remarks enabled his lofty timidity not to approach too directly the request for an assignation. The musician, turning with a frank, imperative and decided air to the flower-seller, raised a hand which repulsed her and indicated to her that they did not want her flowers and that she was to get out of their way as quickly as possible. M. de Charlus observed with ecstasy this

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

authoritative, virile gesture, made by the graceful hand for which it ought still to have been too weighty, too massively brutal, with a precocious firmness and suppleness which gave to this still beardness adolescent the air of a young David capable of waging war against Goliath. The Baron's admiration was unconsciously blended with the smile with which we observe in a child an expression of gravity beyond his years. "This is a person whom I should like to accompany me on my travels and help me in my business. How he would simplify my life," M. de Charlus said to himself.

The train for Paris (which M. de Charlus did not take) started. Then we took our seats in our own train, Albertine and I, without my knowing what had become of M. de Charlus and Morel. "We must never quarrel any more, I beg your pardon again," Albertine repeated, alluding to the Saint-Loup incident. "We must always be nice to each other," she said tenderly. "As for your friend Saint-Loup, if you think that I am the least bit interested in him, you are quite mistaken. All that I like about him is that he seems so very fond of you." "He's a very good fellow," I said, taking care not to supply Robert with those imaginary excellences which I should not have failed to intent, out of friendship for himself, had I been with anybody but Albertine. "He's an excellent creature, frank, devoted, loyal, a person you can rely on to do anything." In saying this I confined myself, held in check by my jealousy, to telling the truth about Saint-Loup, but what I said was literally true. It found expression in precisely the same terms that Mme. de Villeparisis had employed in speaking to me of him, when I did not yet know him, imagined him to be so

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

different, so proud, and said to myself: "People think him good because he is a great gentleman." Just as when she had said to me: "He would be so pleased," I imagined, after seeing him outside the hotel, preparing to drive away, that his aunt's speech had been a mere social banality, intended to flatter me. And I had realised afterwards that she had said what she did sincerely, thinking of the things that interested me, of my reading, and because she knew that that was what Saint-Loup liked, as it was to be my turn to say sincerely to somebody who was writing a history of his ancestor La Rochefoucauld, the author of the *Maximes*, who wished to consult Robert about him: "He will be so pleased." It was simply that I had learned to know him. But, when I set eyes on him for the first time, I had not supposed that an intelligence akin to my own could be enveloped in so much outward elegance of dress and attitude. By his feathers I had judged him to be a bird of another species. It was Albertine now who, perhaps a little because Saint-Loup, in his kindness to myself, had been so cold to her, said to me what I had already thought: "Ah! He is as devoted as all that! I notice that people always find all the virtues in other people, when they belong to the Faubourg Saint-Germain." Now that Saint-Loup belonged to the Faubourg Saint-Germain was a thing of which I had never once thought in the course of all these years in which, stripping himself of his prestige, he had displayed to me his virtues. A change in our perspective in looking at other people, more striking already in friendship than in merely social relations, but how much more striking still in love, where desire on so vast a scale increases to such proportions the slightest signs of coolness, that far

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

less than the coolness Saint-Loup had shewn me in the beginning had been enough to make me suppose at first that Albertine scorned me, imagine her friends to be creatures marvellously inhuman, and ascribe merely to the indulgence that people feel for beauty and for a certain elegance, Elstir's judgment when he said to me of the little band, with just the same sentiment as Mme. de Villeparisis speaking of Saint-Loup: "They are good girls." But this was not the opinion that I would instinctively have formed when I heard Albertine say: "In any case, whether he's devoted or not, I sincerely hope I shall never see him again, since he's made us quarrel. We must never quarrel again. It isn't nice." I felt, since she had seemed to desire Saint-Loup, almost cured for the time being of the idea that she cared for women, which I had supposed to be incurable. And, faced by Albertine's mackintosh in which she seemed to have become another person, the tireless vagrant of rainy days, and which, close-fitting, malleable and grey, seemed at that moment not so much intended to protect her garments from the rain as to have been soaked by her and to be clinging to my mistress's body as though to take the imprint of her form for a sculptor, I tore apart that tunic which jealously espoused a longed-for bosom and, drawing Albertine towards me: "But won't you, indolent traveller, dream upon my shoulder, resting your brow upon it?" I said, taking her head in my hands, and shewing her the wide meadows, flooded and silent, which extended in the gathering dusk to the horizon closed by the parallel openings of valleys far and blue.

Two days later, on the famous Wednesday, in that same little train, which I had again taken, at Balbec, to

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

go and dine at la Raspelière, I was taking care not to miss Cottard at Graincourt-Saint-Vast, where a second telephone message from Mme. Verdurin had told me that I should find him. He was to join my train and would tell me where we had to get out to pick up the carriages that would be sent from la Raspelière to the station. And so, as the little train barely stopped for a moment at Graincourt, the first station after Doncières, I was standing in readiness at the open window, so afraid was I of not seeing Cottard or of his not seeing me. Vain fears! I had not realised to what an extent the little clan had moulded all its regular members after the same type, so that they, being moreover in full evening dress, as they stood waiting upon the platform, let themselves be recognised immediately by a certain air of assurance, fashion and familiarity, by a look in their eyes which seemed to sweep, like an empty space in which there was nothing to arrest their attention, the serried ranks of the common herd, watched for the arrival of some fellow-member who had taken the train at an earlier station, and sparkled in anticipation of the talk that was to come. This sign of election, with which the habit of dining together had marked the members of the little group, was not all that distinguished them; when numerous, in full strength, they were massed together, forming a more brilliant patch in the midst of the troop of passengers—what Brichot called the *pecus*—upon whose dull countenances could be read no conception of what was meant by the name Verdurin, no hope of ever dining at la Raspelière. To be sure, these common travellers would have been less interested than myself had anyone quoted in their hearing—notwithstanding the notoriety that several of them had achieved

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

—the names of those of the faithful whom I was astonished to see continuing to dine out, when many of them had already been doing so, according to the stories that I had heard, before my birth, at a period at once so distant and so vague that I was inclined to exaggerate its remoteness. The contrast between the continuance not only of their existence, but of the fulness of their powers, and the annihilation of so many friends whom I had already seen, in one place or another, pass away, gave me the same sentiment that we feel when in the stop-press column of the newspapers we read the very announcement that we least expected, for instance that of an untimely death, which seems to us fortuitous because the causes that have led up to it have remained outside our knowledge. This is the feeling that death does not descend upon all men alike, but that a more oncoming wave of its tragic tide carries off a life placed at the same level as others which the waves that follow will long continue to spare. We shall see later on that the diversity of the forms of death that circulate invisibly is the cause of the peculiar unexpectedness presented, in the newspapers, by their obituary notices. Then I saw that, with the passage of time, not only do the real talents that may coexist with the most commonplace conversation reveal and impose themselves, but furthermore that mediocre persons arrive at those exalted positions, attached in the imagination of our childhood to certain famous elders, when it never occurred to us that, after a certain number of years, their disciples, become masters, would be famous also, and would inspire the respect and awe that once they felt. But if the names of the faithful were unknown to the *pecus*, their aspect still singled them out in its eyes.

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

Indeed in the train (when the coincidence of what one or another of them might have been doing during the day, assembled them all together), having to collect at a subsequent station only an isolated member, the carriage in which they were gathered, ticketed with the elbow of the sculptor Ski, flagged with Cottard's *Temps*, stood out in the distance like a special saloon, and rallied at the appointed station the tardy comrade. The only one who might, because of his semi-blindness, have missed these welcoming signals, was Brichot. But one of the party would always volunteer to keep a look-out for the blind man, and, as soon as his straw hat, his green umbrella and blue spectacles caught the eye, he would be gently but hastily guided towards the chosen compartment. So that it was inconceivable that one of the faithful, without exciting the gravest suspicions of his being "on the loose," or even of his not having come "by the train," should not pick up the others in the course of the journey. Sometimes the opposite process occurred: one of the faithful had been obliged to go some distance down the line during the afternoon and was obliged in consequence to make part of the journey alone before being joined by the group; but even when thus isolated, alone of his kind, he did not fail as a rule to produce a certain effect. The Future towards which he was travelling marked him out to the person on the seat opposite, who would say to himself: "That must be somebody," would discern, round the soft hat of Cottard or of the sculptor Ski, a vague aureole and would be only half-astonished when at the next station an elegant crowd, if it were their terminal point, greeted the faithful one at the carriage door and escorted him to one of the waiting carriages, all of them reverently

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

saluted by the factotum of Douville station, or, if it were an intermediate station, invaded the compartment. This was what was done, and with precipitation, for some of them had arrived late, just as the train which was already in the station was about to start, by the troop which Cottard led at a run towards the carriage in the window of which he had seen me signalling. Brichot, who was among these faithful, had become more faithful than ever in the course of these years which had diminished the assiduity of others. As his sight became steadily weaker, he had been obliged, even in Paris, to reduce more and more his working hours after dark. Besides he was out of sympathy with the modern Sorbonne, where ideas of scientific exactitude, after the German model, were beginning to prevail over humanism. He now confined himself exclusively to his lectures and to his duties as an examiner; and so had a great deal more time to devote to social pursuits. That is to say, to evenings at the Verdurins', or to those parties that now and again were offered to the Verdurins by one of the faithful, tremulous with emotion. It is true that on two occasions love had almost succeeded in achieving what his work could no longer do, in detaching Brichot from the little clan. But Mme. Verdurin, who kept her eyes open, and moreover, having acquired the habit in the interests of her salon, had come to take a disinterested pleasure in this sort of drama and execution, had immediately brought about a coolness between him and the dangerous person, being skilled in (as she expressed it) "putting things in order" and "applying the red hot iron to the wound." This she had found all the more easy in the case of one of the dangerous persons, who was simply Brichot's laundress,

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

and Mme. Verdurin, having the right of entry into the Professor's fifth floor rooms, crimson with rage, when she deigned to climb his stairs, had only had to shut the door in the wretched woman's face. "What!" the Mistress had said to Brichot, "a woman like myself does you the honour of calling upon you, and you receive a creature like that?" Brichot had never forgotten the service that Mme. Verdurin had rendered him by preventing his old age from foundering in the mire, and became more and more strongly attached to her, whereas, in contrast to this revival of affection and possibly because of it, the Mistress was beginning to be tired of a too docile follower, and of an obedience of which she could be certain beforehand. But Brichot derived from his intimacy with the Verdurins a distinction which set him apart from all his colleagues at the Sorbonne. They were dazzled by the accounts that he gave them of dinner-parties to which they would never be invited, by the mention made of him in the reviews, the exhibition of his portrait in the Salon, by some writer or painter of repute whose talent the occupants of the other chairs in the Faculty of Arts esteemed, but without any prospect of attracting his attention, not to mention the elegance of the mundane philosopher's attire, an elegance which they had mistaken at first for slackness until their colleague kindly explained to them that a tall hat is naturally laid on the floor, when one is paying a call, and is not the right thing for dinners in the country, however smart, where it should be replaced by a soft hat, which goes quite well with a dinner-jacket. For the first few moments after the little group had plunged into the carriage, I could not even speak to Cottard, for he was suffocated,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

not so much by having run in order not to miss the train as by his astonishment at having caught it so exactly. He felt more than the joy inherent in success, almost the hilarity of an excellent joke. "Ah! That was a good one!" he said when he had recovered himself. "A minute later! 'Pon my soul, that's what they call arriving in the nick of time!" he added, with a wink intended not so much to inquire whether the expression were apt, for he was now overflowing with assurance, but to express his satisfaction. At length he was able to introduce me to the other members of the little clan. I was annoyed to see that they were almost all in the dress which in Paris is called smoking. I had forgotten that the Verdurins were beginning a timid evolution towards fashionable ways, retarded by the Dreyfus case, accelerated by the "new" music, an evolution which for that matter they denied, and continued to deny until it was complete, like those military objectives which a general does not announce until he has reached them, so as not to appear defeated if he fails. In addition to which, Society was quite prepared to go half way to meet them. It went so far as to regard them as people to whose house nobody in Society went but who were not in the least perturbed by the fact. The Verdurin salon was understood to be a Temple of Music. It was there, people assured you, that Vinteuil had found inspiration, encouragement. Now, even if Vinteuil's sonata remained wholly unappreciated, and almost unknown, his name, quoted as that of the greatest of modern composers, had an extraordinary effect. Moreover, certain young men of the Faubourg having decided that they ought to be more intellectual than the middle classes, there were three of them who

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

had studied music, and among these Vinteuil's Sonata enjoyed an enormous vogue. They would speak of it, on returning to their homes, to the intelligent mothers who had incited them to acquire culture. And, taking an interest in what interested their sons, at a concert these mothers would gaze with a certain respect at Mme. Verdurin in her front box, following the music in the printed score. So far, this social success latent in the Verdurins was revealed by two facts only. In the first place, Mme. Verdurin would say of the Principessa di Caprarola: "Ah! She is intelligent, she is a charming woman. What I cannot endure, are the imbeciles, the people who bore me, they drive me mad." Which would have made anybody at all perspicacious realise that the Principessa di Caprarola, a woman who moved in the highest society, had called upon Mme. Verdurin. She had even mentioned her name in the course of a visit of condolence which she had paid to Mme. Swann after the death of her husband, and had asked whether she knew them. "What name did you say?" Odette had asked, with a sudden wistfulness. "Verdurin? Oh, yes, of course," she had continued in a plaintive tone, "I don't know them, or rather, I know them without really knowing them, they are people I used to meet at people's houses, years ago, they are quite nice." When the Principessa di Caprarola had gone, Odette would fain have spoken the bare truth. But the immediate falsehood was not the fruit of her calculations, but the revelation of her fears, of her desires. She denied not what it would have been adroit to deny, but what she would have liked not to have happened, even if the other person was bound to hear an hour later that it was a fact. A little later she

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

had recovered her assurance, and would indeed anticipate questions by saying, so as not to appear to be afraid of them: "Mme. Verdurin, why, I used to know her terribly well!" with an affectation of humility, like a great lady who tells you that she has taken the tram. "There has been a great deal of talk about the Verdurins lately," said Mme. de Souvré. Odette, with the smiling disdain of a Duchess, replied: "Yes, I do seem to have heard a lot about them lately. Every now and then there are new people who arrive like that in society," without reflecting that she herself was among the newest. "The Principessa di Caprarola has dined there," Mme. de Souvré went on. "Ah!" replied Odette, accentuating her smile, "that does not surprise me. That sort of thing always begins with the Principessa di Caprarola, and then some one else follows suit, like Comtesse Molé." Odette, in saying this, appeared to be filled with a profound contempt for the two great ladies who made a habit of "house-warming" in recently established drawing-rooms. One felt from her tone that the implication was that she, Odette, was, like Mme. de Souvré, not the sort of person to let herself in for that sort of thing.

After the admission that Mme. de Verdurin had made of the Principessa di Caprarola's intelligence, the second indication that the Verdurins were conscious of their future destiny was that (without, of course, their having formally requested it) they became most anxious that people should now come to dine with them in evening dress. M. Verdurin could now have been greeted without shame by his nephew, the one who was "in the cart."

Among those who entered my carriage at Graincourt was Saniette, who long ago had been expelled from the

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

Verdurins' by his cousin Forcheville, but had since returned. His faults, from the social point of view, had originally been—notwithstanding his superior qualities—something like Cottard's, shyness, anxiety to please, fruitless attempts to succeed in doing so. But if the course of life, by making Cottard assume, if not at the Verdurins', where he had, because of the influence that past associations exert over us when we find ourselves in familiar surroundings, remained more or less the same, at least in his practice, in his hospital ward, at the Academy of Medicine, a shell of coldness, disdain, gravity, that became more accentuated while he rewarded his appreciative students with puns, had made a clean cut between the old Cottard and the new, the same defects had on the contrary become exaggerated in Saniette, the more he sought to correct them. Conscious that he was frequently boring, that people did not listen to him, instead of then slackening his pace as Cottard would have done, of forcing their attention by an air of authority, not only did he try by adopting a humorous tone to make them forgive the unduly serious turn of his conversation, he increased his pace, cleared the ground, used abbreviations in order to appear less long-winded, more familiar with the matters of which he spoke, and succeeded only, by making them unintelligible, in seeming interminable. His self-assurance was not like that of Cottard, freezing his patients, who, when other people praised his social graces, would reply: "He is a different man when he receives you in his consulting room, you with your face to the light, and he with his back to it, and those piercing eyes." It failed to create an effect, one felt that it was cloaking an excessive shyness, that the merest trifle would

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

be enough to dispel it. Saniette, whose friends had always told him that he was wanting in self-confidence, and who had indeed seen men whom he rightly considered greatly inferior to himself, attain with ease to the success that was denied to him, never began telling a story without smiling at its drollery, fearing lest a serious air might make his hearers underestimate the value of his wares. Sometimes, giving him credit for the comic element which he himself appeared to find in what he was about to say, people would do him the honour of a general silence. But the story would fall flat. A fellow-guest who was endowed with a kind heart would sometimes convey to Saniette the private, almost secret encouragement of a smile of approbation, making it reach him furtively, without attracting attention, as one passes a note from hand to hand. But nobody went so far as to assume the responsibility, to risk the glaring publicity of an honest laugh. Long after the story was ended and had fallen flat, Saniette, crestfallen, would remain smiling to himself, as though relishing in it and for himself the delectation which he pretended to find adequate and which the others had not felt. As for the sculptor Ski, so styled on account of the difficulty they found in pronouncing his Polish surname, and because he himself made an affectation, since he had begun to move in a certain social sphere, of not wishing to be confused with certain relatives, perfectly respectable but slightly boring and very numerous, he had, at forty-four and with no pretension to good looks, a sort of boyishness, a dreamy wistfulness which was the result of his having been, until the age of ten, the most charming prodigal imaginable, the darling of all the ladies. Mme. Verdurin maintained that he

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

was more of an artist than Elstir. Any resemblance that there may have been between them was, however, purely external. It was enough to make Elstir, who had met Ski once, feel for him the profound repulsion that is inspired in us less by the people who are our exact opposite than by those who resemble us in what is least good, in whom are displayed our worst qualities, the faults of which we have cured ourselves, who irritate by reminding us of how we may have appeared to certain other people before we became what we now are. But Mme. Verdurin thought that Ski had more temperament than Elstir because there was no art in which he had not a facility of expression, and she was convinced that he would have developed that facility into talent if he had not been so lazy. This seemed to the Mistress to be actually an additional gift, being the opposite of hard work which she regarded as the lot of people devoid of genius. Ski would paint anything you asked, on cuff-links or on the panels over doors. He sang with the voice of a composer, played from memory, giving the piano the effect of an orchestra, less by his virtuosity than by his vamped basses, which suggested the inability of the fingers to indicate that at a certain point the cornet entered, which, for that matter, he would imitate with his lips. Choosing his words when he spoke so as to convey an odd impression, just as he would pause before banging out a chord to say "Ping!" so as to let the brasses be heard, he was regarded as marvellously intelligent, but as a matter of fact his ideas could be boiled down to two or three, extremely limited. Bored with his reputation for whimsicality, he had set himself to shew that he was a practical, matter-of-fact person, whence a triumphant

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

affectation of false precision, of false common sense, aggravated by his having no memory and a fund of information that was always inaccurate. The movements of his head, neck, limbs, would have been graceful if he had been still nine years old, with golden curls, a wide lace collar and little boots of red leather. Having reached Graincourt station with Cottard and Brichot, with time to spare, he and Cottard had left Brichot in the waiting-room and had gone for a stroll. When Cottard proposed to turn back, Ski had replied: "But there is no hurry. It isn't the local train to-day, it's the departmental train." Delighted by the effect that this refinement of accuracy produced upon Cottard, he added, with reference to himself: "Yes, because Ski loves the arts, because he models in clay, people think he's not practical. Nobody knows this line better than I do." Nevertheless they had turned back towards the station when, all of a sudden, catching sight of the smoke of the approaching train, Cottard, with a wild shout, had exclaimed: "We shall have to put our best foot foremost." They did as a matter of fact arrive with not a moment to spare, the distinction between local and departmental trains having never existed save in the mind of Ski. "But isn't the Princess on the train?" came in ringing tones from Brichot, whose huge spectacles, resplendent as the reflectors that laryngologists attach to their foreheads to throw a light into the throats of their patients, seemed to have taken their life from the Professor's eyes, and, possibly because of the effort that he was making to adjust his sight to them, seemed themselves, even at the most trivial moments, to be gazing at themselves with a sustained attention and an extraordinary fixity. Brichot's malady, as it gradually deprived

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

him of his sight, had revealed to him the beauties of that sense, just as, frequently, we have to have made up our minds to part with some object, to make a present of it for instance, before we can study it, regret it, admire it. "No, no, the Princess went over to Maineville with some of Mme. Verdurin's guests who were taking the Paris train. It is within the bounds of possibility that Mme. Verdurin, who had some business at Saint-Mars, may be with her! In that case, she will be coming with us, and we shall all travel together, which will be delightful. We shall have to keep our eyes skinned at Maineville and see what we shall see! Oh, but that's nothing, you may say that we came very near to missing the bus. When I saw the train I was dumbfounded. That's what is called arriving at the psychological moment. Can't you picture us missing the train, Mme. Verdurin seeing the carriages come back without us: *Tableau!*" added the doctor, who had not yet recovered from his emotion. "That would be a pretty good joke, wouldn't it? Now then, Brichot, what have you to say about our little escapade?" inquired the doctor with a note of pride. "Upon my soul," replied Brichot, "why, yes, if you had found the train gone, that would have been what the late Villemain used to call a wipe in the eye!" But I, distracted at first by these people who were strangers to me, was suddenly reminded of what Cottard had said to me in the ball-room of the little casino, and, just as though there were an invisible link uniting an organ to our visual memory, the vision of Albertine leaning her breasts against Andrée's caused my heart a terrible pain. This pain did not last: the idea of Albertine's having relations with women seemed no longer possible since the occasion,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

forty-eight hours earlier, when the advances that my mistress had made to Saint-Loup had excited in me a fresh jealousy which had made me forget the old. I was simple enough to suppose that one taste of necessity excludes another. At Harambouville, as the tram was full, a farmer in a blue blouse who had only a third class ticket got into our compartment. The doctor, feeling that the Princess must not be allowed to travel with such a person, called a porter, shewed his card, describing him as medical officer to one of the big railway companies, and obliged the station-master to make the farmer get out. This incident so pained and alarmed Saniette's timid spirit that, as soon as he saw it beginning, fearing already lest, in view of the crowd of peasants on the platform, it should assume the proportions of a rising, he pretended to be suffering from a stomach-ache, and, so that he might not be accused of any share in the responsibility for the doctor's violence, wandered down the corridor, pretending to be looking for what Cottard called the "water." Failing to find one, he stood and gazed at the scenery from the other end of the "twister." "If this is your first appearance at Mme. Verdurin's, Sir," I was addressed by Brichot, anxious to shew off his talents before a newcomer, "you will find that there is no place where one feels more the 'amenities of life,' to quote one of the inventors of dilettantism, of pococurantism, of all sorts of words in -ism that are in fashion among our little snobesses, I refer to M. le Prince de Talleyrand." For, when he spoke of these great noblemen of the past, he thought it clever and "in the period" to prefix a "M." to their titles, and said "M. le Duc de La Rochefoucauld," "M. le Cardinal de Retz," referring to these also as "That

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

struggle for *lifer de Gondi*," "that *Boulangist de Marcillac*." And he never failed to call *Montesquieu*, with a smile, when he referred to him: "*Monsieur le Président Secondat de Montesquieu*." An intelligent man of the world would have been irritated by a pedantry which reeked so of the lecture-room. But in the perfect manners of the man of the world when speaking of a Prince, there is a pedantry also, which betrays a different caste, that in which one prefixes "the Emperor" to the name "*William*" and addresses a Royal Highness in the third person. "Ah, now, that is a man," *Brichot* continued, still referring to "*Monsieur le Prince de Talleyrand*"—"to whom we take off our hats. He is an ancestor." "It is a charming house," *Cottard* told me, "you will find a little of everything, for *Mme. Verdurin* is not exclusive, great scholars like *Brichot*, the high nobility, such as the Princess *Sherbatoff*, a great Russian lady, a friend of the Grand Duchess *Eudoxie*, who even sees her alone at hours when no one else is admitted." As a matter of fact the Grand Duchess *Eudoxie*, not wishing Princess *Sherbatoff*, who for years past had been cut by everyone, to come to her house when there might be other people, allowed her to come only in the early morning, when Her Imperial Highness was not at home to any of those friends to whom it would have been as unpleasant to meet the Princess as it would have been awkward for the Princess to meet them. As, for the last three years, as soon as she came away, like a manicurist, from the Grand Duchess, *Mme. Sherbatoff* would go on to *Mme. Verdurin*, who had just awoken, and stuck to her for the rest of the day, one might say that the Princess's loyalty surpassed even that of *Brichot*, constant as he was at

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

those Wednesdays, both in Paris, where he had the pleasure of fancying himself a sort of Chateaubriand at l'Abbaye-aux-Bois, and in the country, where he saw himself becoming the equivalent of what might have been in the salon of Mme. de Châtelet the man whom he always named (with an erudite sarcasm and satisfaction): "M. de Voltaire."

Her want of friends had enabled Princess Sherbatoff to shew for some years past to the Verdurins a fidelity which made her more than an ordinary member of the "faithful," the type of faithfulness, the ideal which Mme. Verdurin had long thought unattainable and which now, in her later years, she at length found incarnate in this new feminine recruit. However keenly the Mistress might feel the pangs of jealousy, it was without precedent that the most assiduous of her faithful should not have "failed" her at least once. The most stay-at-home yielded to the temptation to travel; the most continent fell from virtue; the most robust might catch influenza, the idlest be caught for his month's soldiering, the most indifferent go to close the eyes of a dying mother. And it was in vain that Mme. Verdurin told them then, like the Roman Empress, that she was the sole general whom her legion must obey, like the Christ or the Kaiser that he who loved his father or mother more than her and was not prepared to leave them and follow her was not worthy of her, that instead of slacking in bed or letting themselves be made fools of by bad women they would do better to remain in her company, by her, their sole remedy and sole delight. But destiny which is sometimes pleased to brighten the closing years of a life that has passed the mortal span had made Mme. Verdurin meet the Princess

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

Sherbatoff. Out of touch with her family, an exile from her native land, knowing nobody but the Baroness Putbus and the Grand Duchess Eudoxie, to whose houses, because she herself had no desire to meet the friends of the former, and the latter no desire that her friends should meet the Princess, she went only in the early morning hours when Mme. Verdurin was still asleep, never once, so far as she could remember, having been confined to her room since she was twelve years old, when she had had the measles, having on the 31st of December replied to Mme. Verdurin who, afraid of being left alone, had asked her whether she would not "shake down" there for the night, in spite of its being New Year's Eve: "Why, what is there to prevent me, any day of the year? Besides, to-morrow is a day when one stays at home, and this is my home," living in a boarding-house, and moving from it whenever the Verdurins moved, accompanying them upon their holidays, the Princess had so completely exemplified to Mme. Verdurin the line of Vigny:

Thou only didst appear that which one seeks always,

that the Lady President of the little circle, anxious to make sure of one of her "faithful" even after death, had made her promise that whichever of them survived the other should be buried by her side. Before strangers—among whom we must always reckon him to whom we lie most barefacedly because he is the person whose scorn we should most dread: ourself—Princess Sherbatoff took care to represent her only three friendships—with the Grand Duchess, the Verdurins, and the Baroness Putbus—as the only ones, not which cataclysms beyond her control had allowed to emerge from the destruction of

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

all the rest, but which a free choice had made her elect in preference to any other, and to which a certain love of solitude and simplicity had made her confine herself. "I see *nobody* else," she would say, insisting upon the inflexible character of what appeared to be rather a rule that one imposes upon oneself than a necessity to which one submits. She would add: "I visit only three houses," as a dramatist who fears that it may not run to a fourth announces that there will be only three performances of his play. Whether or not M. and Mme. Verdurin believed in the truth of this fiction, they had helped the Princess to instil it into the minds of the faithful. And they in turn were persuaded both that the Princess, among the thousands of invitations that were offered her, had chosen the Verdurins alone, and that the Verdurins, courted in vain by all the higher aristocracy, had consented to make but a single exception, in favour of the Princess.

In their eyes, the Princess, too far superior to her native element not to find it boring, among all the people whose society she might have enjoyed, found the Verdurins alone entertaining, while they, in return, deaf to the overtures with which they were bombarded by the entire aristocracy, had consented to make but a single exception, in favour of a great lady of more intelligence than the rest of her kind, the Princess Sherbatoff.

The Princess was very rich; she engaged for every first night a large box, to which, with the assent of Mme. Verdurin, she invited the faithful and nobody else. People would point to this pale and enigmatic person who had grown old without turning white, turning red rather like certain sere and shrivelled hedgerow fruits. They

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

admired both her influence and her humility, for, having always with her an Academician, Brichot, a famous scientist, Cottard, the leading pianist of the day, at a later date M. de Charlus, she nevertheless made a point of securing the least prominent box in the theatre, remained in the background, paid no attention to the rest of the house, lived exclusively for the little group, who, shortly before the end of the performance, would withdraw in the wake of this strange sovereign, who was not without a certain timid, fascinating, faded beauty. But if Mme. Sherbatoff did not look at the audience, remained in shadow, it was to try to forget that there existed a living world which she passionately desired and was unable to know: the *côterie* in a box was to her what is to certain animals their almost corpse-like immobility in the presence of danger. Nevertheless the thirst for novelty and for the curious which possesses people in society made them pay even more attention perhaps to this mysterious stranger than to the celebrities in the front boxes to whom everybody paid a visit. They imagined that she must be different from the people whom they knew, that a marvellous intellect combined with a discerning bounty retained round about her that little circle of eminent men. The Princess was compelled, if you spoke to her about anyone, or introduced anyone to her, to feign an intense coldness, in order to keep up the fiction of her horror of society. Nevertheless, with the support of Cottard or of Mme. Verdurin, several newcomers succeeded in making her acquaintance and such was her excitement at making a fresh acquaintance that she forgot the fable of her deliberate isolation, and went to the wildest extremes to please the newcomer. If he was entirely unimportant,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the rest would be astonished. "How strange that the Princess, who refuses to know anyone, should make an exception of such an uninteresting person." But these fertilising acquaintances were rare, and the Princess lived narrowly confined in the midst of the faithful.

Cottard said far more often: "I shall see him on Wednesday at the Verdurins'," than: "I shall see him on Tuesday at the Academy." He spoke, too, of the Wednesdays as of an engagement equally important and inevitable. But Cottard was one of those people, little sought-after, who make it as imperious a duty to respond to an invitation as if such invitations were orders, like a military or judicial summons. It required a call from a very important patient to make him "fail" the Verdurins on a Wednesday, the importance depending moreover rather upon the rank of the patient than upon the gravity of his complaint. For Cottard, excellent fellow as he was, would forego the delights of a Wednesday not for a workman who had had a stroke, but for a Minister's cold. Even then he would say to his wife: "Make my apologies to Mme. Verdurin. Tell her that I shall be coming later on. His Excellency might really have chosen some other day to catch cold." One Wednesday their old cook having opened a vein in her arm, Cottard, already in his dinner-jacket to go to the Verdurins', had shrugged his shoulders when his wife had timidly inquired whether he could not bandage the cut: "Of course I can't, Léontine," he had groaned; "can't you see I've got my white waistcoat on?" So as not to annoy her husband, Mme. Cottard had sent post haste for his chief dresser. He, to save time, had taken a cab, with the result that, his carriage entering the courtyard just as

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

Cottard's was emerging to take him to the Verdurins, five minutes had been wasted in backing to let one another pass. Mme. Cottard was worried that the dresser should see his master in evening dress. Cottard sat cursing the delay, from remorse perhaps, and started off in a villainous temper which it took all the Wednesday's pleasures to dispel.

If one of Cottard's patients were to ask him: "Do you ever see the Guermantes?" it was with the utmost sincerity that the Professor would reply: "Perhaps not actually the Guermantes, I can't be certain. But I meet all those people at the house of some friends of mine. You must, of course, have heard of the Verdurins. They know everybody. Besides, they certainly are not people who've come down in the world. They've got the goods, all right. It is generally estimated that Mme. Verdurin is worth thirty-five million. Gad, thirty-five million, that's a pretty figure. And so she doesn't make two bites at a cherry. You mentioned the Duchesse de Guermantes. Let me explain the difference. Mme. Verdurin is a great lady, the Duchesse de Guermantes is probably a nobody. You see the distinction, of course. In any case, whether the Guermantes go to Mme. Verdurin's or not, she entertains all the very best people, the d'Sherbatoffs, the d'Forchevilles, *e tutti quanti*, people of the highest flight, all the nobility of France and Navarre, with whom you would see me conversing as man to man. Of course, those sort of people are only too glad to meet the princes of science," he added, with a smile of fatuous conceit, brought to his lips by his proud satisfaction not so much that the expression formerly reserved for men like Potain and Charcot should now be applicable to

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

himself, as that he knew at last how to employ all these expressions that were authorised by custom, and, after a long course of study, had learned them by heart. And so, after mentioning to me Princess Sherbatoff as one of the people who went to Mme. Verdurin's, Cottard added with a wink "That gives you an idea of the style of the house, if you see what I mean?" He meant that it was the very height of fashion. Now, to entertain a Russian lady who knew nobody but the Grand Duchess Eudoxie was not fashionable at all. But Princess Sherbatoff might not have known even her, it would in no way have diminished Cottard's estimate of the supreme elegance of the Verdurin salon or his joy at being invited there. The splendour that seems to us to invest the people whose houses we visit is no more intrinsic than that of kings and queens on the stage, in dressing whom it is useless for a producer to spend hundreds and thousands of francs in purchasing authentic costumes and real jewels, when a great designer will procure a far more sumptuous impression by focussing a ray of light on a doublet of coarse cloth studded with lumps of glass and on a cloak of paper. A man may have spent his life among the great ones of the earth, who to him have been merely boring relatives or tiresome acquaintances, because a familiarity engendered in the cradle had stripped them of all distinction in his eyes. The same man, on the other hand, need only have been led by some chance to mix with the most obscure people, for innumerable Cottards to be permanently dazzled by the ladies of title whose drawing-rooms they imagined as the centres of aristocratic elegance, ladies who were not even what Mme. de Villeparisis and her friends were (great ladies fallen from

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

their greatness, whom the aristocracy that had been brought up with them no longer visited); no, those whose friendship has been the pride of so many men, if these men were to publish their memoirs and to give the names of those women and of the other women who came to their parties, Mme. de Cambremer would be no more able than Mme. de Guermantes to identify them. But what of that! A Cottard has thus his Marquise, who is to him "the Baronne," as in Marivaux, the Baronne whose name is never mentioned, so much so that nobody supposes that she ever had a name. Cottard is all the more convinced that she embodies the aristocracy—which has never heard of the lady—in that, the more dubious titles are, the more prominently coronets are displayed upon wineglasses, silver, notepaper, luggage. Many Cottards who have supposed that they were living in the heart of the Faubourg Saint-Germain have had their imagination perhaps more enchanted by feudal dreams than the men who did really live among Princes, just as with the small shopkeeper who, on Sundays, goes sometimes to look at "old time" buildings, it is sometimes from those buildings every stone of which is of our own time, the vaults of which have been, by the pupils of Viollet-le-Duc, painted blue and sprinkled with golden stars, that they derive the strongest sensation of the middle ages. "The Princess will be at Maineville. She will be coming with us. But I shall not introduce you to her at once. It will be better to leave that to Mme. Verdurin. Unless I find a loophole. Then you can rely on me to take the bull by the horns." "What were you saying?" asked Saniette, as he rejoined us, pretending to have gone out to take the air. "I was quoting to this

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

gentleman," said Brichot, "a saying, which you will remember, of the man who, to my mind, is the first of the *fins-de-siècle* (of the eighteenth century, that is), by name Charles Maurice, Abbé de Perigord. He began by promising to be an excellent journalist. But he made a bad end, by which I mean that he became a Minister! Life has these tragedies. A far from scrupulous politician to boot who, with the lofty contempt of a thoroughbred nobleman, did not hesitate to work in his time for the King of Prussia, there are no two ways about it, and died in the skin of a 'Left Centre.'"

At Saint-Pierre-des-Ifs we were joined by a glorious girl who, unfortunately, was not one of the little group. I could not tear my eyes from her magnolia skin, her dark eyes, her bold and admirable outlines. A moment later she wanted to open a window, for it was hot in the compartment, and not wishing to ask leave of everybody, as I alone was without a greatcoat, she said to me in a quick, cool, jocular voice: "Do you mind a little fresh air, Sir?" I would have liked to say to her: "Come with us to the Verdurins?" or "Give me your name and address." I answered: "No, fresh air doesn't bother me, Mademoiselle." Whereupon, without stirring from her seat: "Do your friends object to smoke?" and she lit a cigarette. At the third station she sprang from the carriage. Next day, I inquired of Albertine, who she could be. For, stupidly thinking that people could have but one sort of love, in my jealousy of Albertine's attitude towards Robert, I was reassured so far as other women were concerned. Albertine told me, I believe quite sincerely, that she did not know. "I should so much like

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

to see her again," I exclaimed. "Don't worry, one always sees people again," replied Albertine. In this particular instance, she was wrong; I never saw again, nor did I ever identify the pretty girl with the cigarette. We shall see, moreover, why, for a long time, I ceased to look for her. But I have not forgotten her. I find myself at times, when I think of her, seized by a wild longing. But these recurrences of desire oblige us to reflect that if we wish to rediscover these girls with the same pleasure we must also return to the year which has since been followed by ten others in the course of which her bloom has faded. We can sometimes find a person again, but we cannot abolish time. And so on until the unforeseen day, gloomy as a winter night, when we no longer seek for that girl, or for any other, when to find her would actually frighten us. For we no longer feel that we have sufficient attraction to appeal to her, or strength to love her. Not, of course, that we are, in the strict sense of the word, impotent. And as for loving, we should love her more than ever. But we feel that it is too big an undertaking for the little strength that we have left. Eternal rest has already fixed intervals which we can neither cross nor make our voice be heard across them. To set our foot on the right step is an achievement like not missing the perilous leap. To be seen in such a state by a girl we love, even if we have kept the features and all the golden locks of our youth! We can no longer undertake the strain of keeping pace with youth. All the worse if our carnal desire increases instead of failing! We procure for it a woman whom we need make no effort to attract, who will share our couch for one night only and whom we shall never see again.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

"Still no news, I suppose, of the violinist," said Cottard. The event of the day in the little clan was, in fact, the failure of Mme. Verdurin's favourite violinist. Employed on military service near Doncières, he came three times a week to dine at la Raspelière, having a midnight pass. But two days ago, for the first time, the faithful had been unable to discover him on the tram. It was supposed that he had missed it. But albeit Mme. Verdurin had sent to meet the next tram, and so on until the last had arrived, the carriage had returned empty. "He's certain to have been shoved into the guard-room, there's no other explanation of his desertion. Gad! In soldiering, you know, with those fellows, it only needs a bad-tempered serjeant." "It will be all the more mortifying for Mme. Verdurin," said Brichot, "if he fails again this evening, because our kind hostess has invited to dinner for the first time the neighbours from whom she has taken la Raspelière, the Marquis and Marquise de Cambremer." "This evening, the Marquis and Marquise de Cambremer!" exclaimed Cottard. "But I knew absolutely nothing about it. Naturally, I knew like everybody else that they would be coming one day, but I had no idea that it was to be so soon. Saprismi!" he went on, turning to myself, "what did I tell you? The Princess Sherbatoff, the Marquis and Marquise de Cambremer." And, after repeating these names, lulling himself with their melody: "You see that we move in good company," he said to me. "However, as it's your first appearance, you'll be one of the crowd. It is going to be an exceptionally brilliant gathering." And, turning to Brichot, he went on: "The Mistress will be furious. It is time we appeared to lend her a hand." Ever since

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

Mme. Verdurin had been at la Raspelière she had pretended for the benefit of the faithful to be at once feeling and regretting the necessity of inviting her landlords for one evening. By so doing she would obtain better terms next year, she explained, and was inviting them for business reasons only. But she pretended to regard with such terror, to make such a bugbear of the idea of dining with people who did not belong to the little group that she kept putting off the evil day. The prospect did for that matter alarm her slightly for the reasons which she professed, albeit exaggerating them, if at the same time it enchanted her for reasons of snobbishness which she preferred to keep to herself. She was therefore partly sincere, she believed the little clan to be something so matchless throughout the world, one of those perfect wholes which it takes centuries of time to produce, that she trembled at the thought of seeing introduced into its midst these provincials, people ignorant of the Ring and the Meistersinger, who would be unable to play their part in the concert of conversation and were capable, by coming to Mme. Verdurin's, of ruining one of those famous Wednesdays, masterpieces of art incomparable and frail, like those Venetian glasses which one false note is enough to shatter. "Besides, they are bound to be absolutely *anti*, and militarists," M. Verdurin had said. "Oh, as for that, I don't mind, we've heard quite enough about all that business," had replied Mme. Verdurin, who, a sincere Dreyfusard, would nevertheless have been glad to discover a social counterpoise to the preponderant Dreyfusism of her salon. For, Dreyfusism was triumphant politically, but not socially. Labori, Reinach, Picquart, Zola were still, to people in society, more or less traitors,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

who could only keep them aloof from the little nucleus. And so, after this incursion into politics, Mme. Verdurin was determined to return to the world of art. Besides were not Indy, Debussy, on the "wrong" side in the Case? "So far as the Case goes, we need only remember Brichot," she said (the Don being the only one of the faithful who had sided with the General Staff, which had greatly lowered him in the esteem of Madame Verdurin). "There is no need to be eternally discussing the Dreyfus Case. No, the fact of the matter is that the Cambremers bore me." As for the faithful, no less excited by their unconfessed desire to make the Cambremers' acquaintance than dupes of the affected reluctance which Mme. Verdurin said she felt to invite them, they returned, day after day, in conversation with her, to the base arguments with which she herself supported the invitation, tried to make them irresistible. "Make up your mind to it once and for all," Cottard repeated, "and you will have better terms for next year, they will pay the gardener, you will have the use of the meadow. That will be well worth a boring evening. I am thinking only of yourselves," he added, albeit his heart had leaped on one occasion, when, in Mme. Verdurin's carriage, he had met the carriage of the old Mme. de Cambremer and, what was more, he had been abased in the sight of the railwaymen when, at the station, he had found himself standing beside the Marquis. For their part, the Cambremers, living far too remote from the social movement ever to suspect that certain ladies of fashion were speaking with a certain consideration of Mme. Verdurin, imagined that she was a person who could know none but Bohemians, was perhaps not even legally married, and so far as people of birth

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

were concerned would never meet any but themselves. They had resigned themselves to the thought of dining with her only to be on good terms with a tenant who, they hoped, would return again for many seasons, especially after they had, in the previous month, learned that she had recently inherited all those millions. It was in silence and without any vulgar pleasantries that they prepared themselves for the fatal day. The faithful had given up hope of its ever coming, so often had Mme. Verdurin already fixed in their hearing a date that was invariably postponed. These false decisions were intended not merely to make a display of the boredom that she felt at the thought of this dinner-party, but to keep in suspense those members of the little group who were staying in the neighbourhood and were sometimes inclined to fail. Not that the Mistress guessed that the "great day" was as delightful a prospect to them as to herself, but in order that, having persuaded them that this dinner-party was to her the most terrible of social duties, she might make an appeal to their devotion. "You are not going to leave me all alone with those Chinese mandarins! We must assemble in full force to support the boredom. Naturally, we shan't be able to talk about any of the things in which we are interested. It will be a Wednesday spoiled, but what is one to do!"

"Indeed," Brichot explained to me, "I fancy that Mme. Verdurin, who is highly intelligent and takes infinite pains in the elaboration of her Wednesdays, was by no means anxious to see these bumpkins of ancient lineage but scanty brains. She could not bring herself to invite the dowager Marquise, but has resigned herself to having the son and daughter-in-law." "Ah! We are

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

to see the Marquise de Cambremer?" said Cottard with a smile into which he saw fit to introduce a leer of sentimentality, albeit he had no idea whether Mme. de Cambremer were good-looking or not. But the title Marquise suggested to him fantastic thoughts of gallantry. "Ah! I know her," said Ski, who had met her once when he was out with Mme. Verdurin. "Not in the biblical sense of the word, I trust," said the doctor, darting a sly glance through his eyeglass; this was one of his favourite pleasantries. "She is intelligent," Ski informed me. "Naturally," he went on, seeing that I said nothing, and dwelling with a smile upon each word, "she is intelligent and at the same time she is not, she lacks education, she is frivolous, but she has an instinct for beautiful things. She may say nothing, but she will never say anything silly. And besides, her colouring is charming. She would be an amusing person to paint," he added, half shutting his eyes, as though he saw her posing in front of him. As my opinion of her was quite the opposite of what Ski was expressing with so many fine shades, I observed merely that she was the sister of an extremely distinguished engineer, M. Legrandin. "There, you see, you are going to be introduced to a pretty woman," Brichot said to me, "and one never knows what may come of that. Cleopatra was not even a great lady, she was a little woman, the unconscious, terrible little woman of our Meilhac, and just think of the consequences, not only to that idiot Antony, but to the whole of the ancient world." "I have already been introduced to Mme. de Cambremer," I replied. "Ah! In that case, you will find yourself on familiar ground." "I shall be all the more delighted to meet her," I answered him, "because

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

she has promised me a book by the former curé of Combray about the place-names of this district, and I shall be able to remind her of her promise. I am interested in that priest, and also in etymologies.” “Don’t put any faith in the ones he gives,” replied Brichot, “there is a copy of the book at la Raspelière, which I have glanced through, but without finding anything of any value; it is a mass of error. Let me give you an example. The word Bricq is found in a number of place-names in this neighbourhood. The worthy cleric had the distinctly odd idea that it comes from Briga, a height, a fortified place. He finds it already in the Celtic tribes, Latobriges, Nemetobriges, and so forth, and traces it down to such names as Briand, Brion, and so forth. To confine ourselves to the region in which we have the pleasure of your company at this moment, Bricquebose means the wood on the height, Bricqueville the habitation on the height, Bricquebec, where we shall be stopping presently before coming to Maineville, the height by the stream. Now there is not a word of truth in all this, for the simple reason that *bricq* is the old Norse word which means simply a bridge. Just as *fleur*, which Mme. de Cambremer’s protégé takes infinite pains to connect, in one place with the Scandinavian words *floi*, *flo*, in another with the Irish word *ae* or *aer*, is, beyond any doubt, the *fjord* of the Danes, and means harbour. So too, the excellent priest thinks that the station of Saint-Mars-le-Vêtu, which adjoins la Raspelière, means Saint-Martin-le-Vieux (*vetus*). It is unquestionable that the word *vieux* has played a great part in the toponymy of this region. *Vieux* comes as a rule from *vadum*, and means a passage, as at the place called les Vieux. It is what the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

English call *ford* (Oxford, Hereford). But, in this particular instance, Vêtu is derived not from *vetus*, but from *vastatus*, a place that is devastated and bare. You have, round about here, Sottevast, the *vast* of Setold, Brillevast, the *vast* of Berold. I am all the more certain of the curé's mistake, in that Saint-Mars-le-Vêtu was formerly called Saint-Mars du Gast and even Saint-Mars-de-Terregate. Now the *v* and the *g* in these words are the same letter. We say *dévaster*, but also *gâcher*. *Jâchères* and *gâtines* (from the High German *wastinna*) have the same meaning: Terregate is therefore *terra vasta*. As for Saint-Mars, formerly (save the mark) Saint-Merd, it is Saint-Medardus, which appears variously as Saint-Médard, Saint-Mard, Saint-Marc, Cinq-Mars, and even Dammas. Nor must we forget that quite close to here, places bearing the name of Mars are proof simply of a pagan origin (the god Mars) which has remained alive in this country but which the holy man refuses to see. The high places dedicated to the gods are especially frequent, such as the mount of Jupiter (Jeu-mont). Your curé declines to admit this, but, on the other hand, wherever Christianity has left traces, they escape his notice. He has gone so far afield as to Loc-tudy, a barbarian name, according to him, whereas it is simply *Locus Sancti Tudenii*, nor has he in Sammarcoles divined *Sanctus Martialis*. Your curé," Brichot continued, seeing that I was interested, "derives the terminations *hon*, *home*, *holm*, from the word *holl* (*hullus*), a hill, whereas it comes from the Norse *holm*, an island, with which you are familiar in Stockholm, and which is so widespread throughout this district, la Houleme, Engohomme, Tahoume, Robehomme, Néhomme, Quettehon,

and so forth." These names made me think of the day when Albertine had wished to go to Amfreville-la-Bigot (from the name of two successive lords of the manor, Brichot told me), and had then suggested that we should dine together at Robehomme. As for Maineville, we were just coming to it. "Isn't Néhomme," I asked, "somewhere near Carquethuit and Clitourps?" "Precisely; Néhomme is the *holm*, the island or peninsula of the famous Viscount Nigel, whose name has survived also in Névile. The Carquethuit and Clitourps that you mention furnish Mme. de Cambremer's protégé with an occasion for further blunders. No doubt he has seen that *carque* is a church, the *Kirche* of the Germans. You will remember Querqueville, not to mention Dunkerque. For there we should do better to stop and consider the famous word *Dun*, which to the Celts meant high ground. And that you will find over the whole of France. Your abbé was hypnotised by Duneville, which recurs in the Eure-et-Loir; he would have found Châteaudun, Dun-le-Roi in the Cher, Duneau in the Sarthe, Dun in the Ariège, Duneles-Places in the Nièvre, and many others. This word *Dun* leads him into a curious error with regard to Douville where we shall be alighting, and shall find Mme. Verdurin's comfortable carriages awaiting us. Douville, in Latin *donvilla*, says he. As a matter of fact, Douville does lie at the foot of high hills. Your curé, who knows everything, feels all the same that he has made a blunder. He has, indeed, found in an old cartulary, the name *Domvilla*. Whereupon he retracts; Douville, according to him, is a fief belonging to the Abbot, *Domino Abbati*, of Mont Saint-Michel. He is delighted with the discovery, which is distinctly odd when one thinks of the scandalous

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

life that, according to the Capitulary of Sainte-Claire sur Epte, was led at Mont Saint-Michel, though no more extraordinary than to picture the King of Denmark as suzerain of all this coast, where he encouraged the worship of Odin far more than that of Christ. On the other hand, the supposition that the *n* has been changed to *m* does not shock me, and requires less alteration than the perfectly correct Lyon, which also is derived from *Dun* (*Lugdunum*). But the fact is, the abbé is mistaken. Douville was never Donville, but Doville, *Eudonis villa*, the village of Eudes. Douville was formerly called Escacleiff, the steps up the cliff. About the year 1233, Eudes le Bouteiller, Lord of Escacleiff, set out for the Holy Land; on the eve of his departure he made over the church to the Abbey of Blanchelande. By an exchange of courtesies, the village took his name, whence we have Douville to-day. But I must add that toponymy, of which moreover I know little or nothing, is not an exact science; had we not this historical evidence, Douville might quite well come from Ouville, that is to say the Waters. The forms in *ai* (Aigues-Mortes), from *aqua*, are constantly changed to *eu* or *ou*. Now there were, quite close to Douville, certain famous springs, Carque-thuit. You might suppose that the curé was only too ready to detect there a Christian origin, especially as this district seems to have been pretty hard to convert, since successive attempts were made by Saint Ursal, Saint Gofroi, Saint Barsanore, Saint Laurent of Brèvedent, who finally handed over the task to the monks of Beaubec. But as regards *thuit* the writer is mistaken, he sees in it a form of *toft*, a building, as in Cricquetot, Ectot, Yvetot, whereas it is the *thveit*, the clearing, the reclaimed land,

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

as in Braquetuit, le Thuit, Regnetuit, and so forth. Similarly, if he recognises in Clitourps the Norman *thorp* which means village, he insists that the first syllable of the word must come from *clivus*, a slope, whereas it comes from *cliff*, a precipice. But his biggest blunders are due not so much to his ignorance as to his prejudices. However loyal a Frenchman one is, there is no need to fly in the face of the evidence and take Saint-Laurent en Bray to be the Roman priest, so famous at one time, when he is actually Saint Lawrence 'Toot, Archbishop of Dublin. But even more than his patriotic sentiments, your friend's religious bigotry leads him into strange errors. Thus you have not far from our hosts at la Raspelière two places called Montmartin, Montmartin-sur-Mer and Montmartin-en-Graignes. In the case of Graignes, the good curé has been quite right, he has seen that Graignes, in Latin *Grania*, in Greek *Krene*, means ponds, marshes; how many instances of Cresmays, Croen, Gremeville, Lengronne, might we not adduce? But, when he comes to Montmartin, your self-styled linguist positively insists that these must be parishes dedicated to Saint Martin. He bases his opinion upon the fact that the Saint is their patron, but does not realise that he was only adopted subsequently; or rather he is blinded by his hatred of paganism; he refuses to see that we should say Mont-Saint-Martin as we say Mont-Saint-Michel, if it were a question of Saint Martin, whereas the name Montmartin refers in a far more pagan fashion to temples consecrated to the god Mars, temples of which, it is true, no other vestige remains, but which the undisputed existence in the neighbourhood of vast Roman camps would render highly probable even without the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

name Montmartin, which removes all doubt. You see that the little pamphlet which you will find at la Raspe-lière is far from perfect." I protested that at Combray the curé had often told us interesting etymologies. "He was probably better on his own ground, the move to Normandy must have made him lose his bearings." "Nor did it do him any good," I added, "for he came here with neurasthenia and went away again with rheumatism." "Ah, his neurasthenia is to blame. He has lapsed from neurasthenia to philology, as my worthy master Pocquelin would have said. Tell us, Cottard, do you suppose that neurasthenia can have a disturbing effect on philology, philology a soothing effect on neurasthenia and the relief from neurasthenia lead to rheumatism?" "Undoubtedly, rheumatism and neurasthenia are subordinate forms of neuro-arthritis. You may pass from one to the other by metastasis." "The eminent Professor," said Brichot, "expresses himself in a French as highly infused with Latin and Greek as M. Purgon himself, of Molièresque memory! My uncle, I refer to our national Sarcey. . . ." But he was prevented from finishing his sentence. The Professor had leaped from his seat with a wild shout: "The devil!" he exclaimed on regaining his power of articulate speech, "we have passed Maineville (d'you hear?) and Renneville too." He had just noticed that the train was stopping at Saint-Mars-le-Vêtu, where most of the passengers alighted. "They can't have run through without stopping. We must have failed to notice it while we were talking about the Cambremers. Listen to me, Ski, pay attention, I am going to tell you 'a good one,'" said Cottard, who had taken a fancy to this expression, in

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

common use in certain medical circles. "The Princess must be on the train, she can't have seen us, and will have got into another compartment. Come along and find her. Let's hope this won't land us in trouble!" And he led us all off in search of Princess Sherbatoff. He found her in the corner of an empty compartment, reading the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. She had long ago, from fear of rebuffs, acquired the habit of keeping in her place, or remaining in her corner, in life as on the train, and of not offering her hand until the other person had greeted her. She went on reading as the faithful trooped into her carriage. I recognised her immediately; this woman who might have forfeited her position but was nevertheless of exalted birth, who in any event was the pearl of a salon such as the Verdurins', was the lady whom, on the same train, I had put down, two days earlier, as possibly the keeper of a brothel. Her social personality, which had been so vague, became clear to me as soon as I learned her name, just as when, after racking our brains over a puzzle, we at length hit upon the word which clears up all the obscurity, and which, in the case of a person, is his name. To discover two days later who the person is with whom one has travelled in the train is a far more amusing surprise than to read in the next number of a magazine the clue to the problem set in the previous number. Big restaurants, casinos, local trains, are the family portrait galleries of these social enigmas. "Princess, we must have missed you at Maineville! May we come and sit in your compartment?" "Why, of course," said the Princess who, upon hearing Cottard address her, but only then, raised from her magazine a pair of eyes which, like the eyes of M. de Charlus, although gentler,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

saw perfectly well the people of whose presence she pretended to be unaware. Cottard, coming to the conclusion that the fact of my having been invited to meet the Cambremers was a sufficient recommendation, decided, after a momentary hesitation, to introduce me to the Princess, who bowed with great courtesy but appeared to be hearing my name for the first time. "Crénom!" cried the doctor, "my wife has forgotten to make them change the buttons on my white waistcoat. Ah! Those women, they never remember anything. Don't you ever marry, my boy," he said to me. And as this was one of the pleasantries which he considered appropriate when he had nothing else to say, he peeped out of the corner of his eye at the Princess and the rest of the faithful, who, because he was a Professor and an Academician, smiled back, admiring his good temper and freedom from pride. The Princess informed us that the young violinist had been found. He had been confined to bed the evening before by a sick headache, but was coming that evening and bringing with him a friend of his father whom he had met at Doncières. She had learned this from Mme. Verdurin with whom she had taken luncheon that morning, she told us in a rapid voice, rolling her *rs*, with her Russian accent, softly at the back of her throat, as though they were not *rs* but *ls*. "Ah! You had luncheon with her this morning," Cottard said to the Princess; but turned his eyes to myself, the purport of this remark being to shew me on what intimate terms the Princess was with the Mistress. "You are indeed a faithful adherent!" "Yes, I love the little circle, so intelligent, so agreeable, neverl spiteful, quite simple, not at all snobbish, and clevel to theirl fingle-tips." "Nom

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

d'une pipe! I must have lost my ticket, I can't find it anywhere," cried Cottard, with an agitation that was, in the circumstances, quite unjustified. He knew that at Douville, where a couple of landaus would be awaiting us, the collector would let him pass without a ticket, and would only bare his head all the more humbly, so that the salute might furnish an explanation of his indulgence, to wit that he had of course recognised Cottard as one of the Verdurins' regular guests. "They won't shove me in the lock-up for that," the doctor concluded. "You were saying, Sir," I inquired of Brichot, "that there used to be some famous waters near here; how do we know that?" "The name of the next station is one of a multitude of proofs. It is called Fervaches." "I don't undstand what he's talking about," mumbled the Princess, as though she were saying to me out of politeness: "He's rather a bore, ain't he?" "Why, Princess, Fervaches means hot springs. *Fervidae aquae*. But to return to the young violinist," Brichot went on, "I was quite forgetting, Cottard, to tell you the great news. Had you heard that our poor friend Dechambre, who used to be Mme. Verdurin's favourite pianist, has just died? It is terribly sad." "He was quite young," replied Cottard, "but he must have had some trouble with his liver, there must have been something sadly wrong in that quarter, he had been looking very queer indeed for a long time past." "But he was not so young as all that," said Brichot; "in the days when Elstir and Swann used to come to Mme. Verdurin's, Dechambre had already made himself a reputation in Paris, and, what is remarkable, without having first received the baptism of success abroad. Ah! He was no follower of the Gospel accord-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

ing to Saint Barnum, that fellow." "You are mistaken, he could not have been going to Mme. Verdurin's, at that time, he was still in the nursery." "But, unless my old memory plays me false, I was under the impression that Dechambre used to play Vinteuil's sonata for Swann, when that clubman, who had broken with the aristocracy, had still no idea that he was one day to become the embourgeoised Prince Consort of our national Odette." "It is impossible, Vinteuil's sonata was played at Mme. Verdurin's long after Swann ceased to come there," said the doctor, who, like all people who work hard and think that they remember many things which they imagine to be of use to them, forget many others, a condition which enables them to go into ecstasies over the memories of people who have nothing else to do. "You are hopelessly muddled, though your brain is as sound as ever," said the doctor with a smile. Brichot admitted that he was mistaken. The train stopped. We were at la Sogne. The name stirred my curiosity. "How I should like to know what all these names mean," I said to Cottard. "You must ask M. Brichot, he may know, perhaps." "Why, la Sogne is la Cicogne, *Siconia*," replied Brichot, whom I was burning to interrogate about many other names.

Forgetting her attachment to her "corner," Mme. Sherbatoff kindly offered to change places with me, so that I might talk more easily with Brichot, whom I wanted to ask about other etymologies that interested me, and assured me that she did not mind in the least whether she travelled with her face or her back to the engine, standing, or seated, or anyhow. She remained on the defensive until she had discovered a newcomer's intentions, but as

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

soon as she had realised that these were friendly, she would do everything in her power to oblige. At length the train stopped at the station of Douville-Féterne, which being more or less equidistant from the villages of Féterne and Douville, bore for this reason their hyphenated name. "Saperlipopette!" exclaimed Doctor Cottard, when we came to the barrier where the tickets were collected, and, pretending to have only just discovered his loss, "I can't find my ticket, I must have lost it." But the collector, taking off his cap, assured him that it did not matter and smiled respectfully. The Princess (giving instructions to the coachman, as though she were a sort of lady in waiting to Mme. Verdurin, who, because of the Cambremers, had not been able to come to the station, as, for that matter, she rarely did) took me, and also Brichtot, with herself in one of the carriages. The doctor, Saniette and Ski got into the other.

The driver, although quite young, was the Verdurins' first coachman, the only one who had any right to the title; he took them, in the daytime, on all their excursions, for he knew all the roads, and in the evening went down to meet the faithful and took them back to the station later on. He was accompanied by extra helpers (whom he selected if necessary). He was an excellent fellow, sober and capable, but with one of those melancholy faces on which a fixed stare indicates that the merest trifle will make the person fly into a passion, not to say nourish dark thoughts. But at the moment he was quite happy, for he had managed to secure a place for his brother, another excellent type of fellow, with the Verdurins. We began by driving through Douville. Grassy knolls ran down from the village to the sea, in wide slopes

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

to which their saturation in moisture and salt gave a richness, a softness, a vivacity of extreme tones. The islands and indentations of Rivebelle, far nearer now than at Balbec, gave this part of the coast the appearance, novel to me, of a relief map. We passed by some little bungalows, almost all of which were let to painters; turned into a track upon which some loose cattle, as frightened as were our horses, barred our way for ten minutes, and emerged upon the cliff road. "But, by the immortal gods," Brichot suddenly asked, "let us return to that poor Dechambre; do you suppose Mme. Verdurin *knows*? Has anyone told *her*?" Mme. Verdurin, like most people who move in society, simply because she needed the society of other people, never thought of them again for a single day, as soon as, being dead, they could no longer come to the Wednesdays, nor to the Saturdays, nor dine without dressing. And one could not say of the little clan, a type in this respect of all salons, that it was composed of more dead than living members, seeing that, as soon as one was dead, it was as though one had never existed. But, to escape the nuisance of having to speak of the deceased, in other words to postpone one of the dinners—a thing impossible to the mistress—as a token of mourning, M. Verdurin used to pretend that the death of the faithful had such an effect on his wife that, in the interest of her health, it must never be mentioned to her. Moreover, and perhaps just because the death of other people seemed to him so conclusive, so vulgar an accident, the thought of his own death filled him with horror and he shunned any consideration that might lead to it. As for Brichot, since he was the soul of honesty and completely taken in by what M. Verdurin said about his wife, he

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

dreaded for his friend's sake the emotions that such a bereavement must cause her. "Yes, she *knew the worst* this morning," said the Princess, "it was impossible to *keep it from her*." "Ah! Thousand thunders of Zeus!" cried Brichot, "Ah! it must have been a terrible blow, a friend of twenty-five years standing. There was a man who was one of us." Of course, of course, what can you expect? Such incidents are bound to be painful; but Madame Verdurin is a brave woman, she is even more cerebral than emotive." "I don't altogether agree with the Doctor," said the Princess, whose rapid speech, her murmured accents, certainly made her appear both sullen and rebellious. "Mme. Verdurin, beneath a cold exterior, conceals treasures of sensibility. M. Verdurin told me that he had had great difficulty in preventing her from going to Paris for the funeral; he was obliged to let her think that it was all to be held in the country." "The devil! She wanted to go to Paris, did she? Of course, I know that she has a heart, too much heart perhaps. Poor Dechambre! As Madame Verdurin remarked not two months ago: 'Compared with him, Planté, Paderewski, Risler himself are nowhere!' Ah, he could say with better reason than that limelighter Nero, who has managed to take in even German scholarship: *Qualis artifex pereo!* But he at least, Dechambre, must have died in the fulfilment of his priesthood, in the odour of Beethovenian devotion; and gallantly, I have no doubt; he had every right, that interpreter of German music, to pass away while celebrating the Mass in D. But he was, when all is said, the man to greet the unseen with a cheer, for that inspired performer would produce at times from

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the Parisianised Champagne stock of which he came, the swagger and smartness of a guardsman."

From the height we had now reached, the sea suggested no longer, as at Balbec, the undulations of swelling mountains, but on the contrary the view, beheld from a mountain-top or from a road winding round its flank, of a blue-green glacier or a glittering plain, situated at a lower level. The lines of the currents seemed to be fixed upon its surface, and to have traced there for ever their concentric circles; the enamelled face of the sea which changed imperceptibly in colour, assumed towards the head of the bay, where an estuary opened, the blue whiteness of milk, in which little black boats that did not move seemed entangled like flies. I felt that from nowhere could one discover a vaster prospect. But at each turn in the road a fresh expanse was added to it and when we arrived at the Douville toll-house, the spur of the cliff which until then had concealed from us half the bay, withdrew, and all of a sudden I descried upon my left a gulf as profound as that which I had already had before me, but one that changed the proportions of the other and doubled its beauty. The air at this lofty point acquired a keenness and purity that intoxicated me. I adored the Verdurins; that they should have sent a carriage for us seemed to me a touching act of kindness. I should have liked to kiss the Princess. I told her that I had never seen anything so beautiful. She professed that she too loved this spot more than any other. But I could see that to her as to the Verdurins the thing that really mattered was not to gaze at the view like tourists, but to partake of good meals there, to entertain people whom they liked, to write letters, to read books, in short

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

to live in these surroundings, passively allowing the beauty of the scene to soak into them rather than making it the object of their attention.

After the toll-house, where the carriage had stopped for a moment at such a height above the sea that, as from a mountain-top, the sight of the blue gulf beneath almost made one dizzy, I opened the window; the sound, distinctly caught, of each wave that broke in turn had something sublime in its softness and precision. Was it not like an index of measurement which, upsetting all our ordinary impressions, shews us that vertical distances may be coordinated with horizontal, in contradiction of the idea that our mind generally forms of them; and that, though they bring the sky nearer to us in this way, they are not great; that they are indeed less great for a sound which traverses them as did the sound of those little waves, the medium through which it has to pass being purer. And in fact if one went back but a couple of yards below the toll-house, one could no longer distinguish that sound of waves, which six hundred feet of cliff had not robbed of its delicate, minute and soft precision. I said to myself that my grandmother would have listened to it with the delight that she felt in all manifestations of nature or art, in the simplicity of which one discerns grandeur. I was now at the highest pitch of exaltation, which raised everything round about me accordingly. It melted my heart that the Verdurins should have sent to meet us at the station. I said as much to the Princess, who seemed to think that I was greatly exaggerating so simple an act of courtesy. I know that she admitted subsequently to Cottard that she found me very enthusiastic; he replied that I was too emotional, required sedatives

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

and ought to take to knitting. I pointed out to the Princess every tree, every little house smothered in its mantle of roses, I made her admire everything, I would have liked to take her in my arms and press her to my heart. She told me that she could see that I had a gift for painting, that of course I must sketch, that she was surprised that nobody had told her about it. And she confessed that the country was indeed picturesque. We drove through, where it perched upon its height, the little village of Englesqueville (*Engleberti villa*, Brichot informed us). "But are you quite sure that there will be a party this evening, in spite of Dechambre's death, Princess?" he went on, without stopping to think that the presence at the station of the carriage in which we were sitting was in itself an answer to his question. "Yes," said the Princess, "M. Verldulin insisted that it should not be put off, simply to keep his wife from *thinking*. And besides, after never failing for all these years to entertain on Wednesdays, such a change in her habits would have been bound to upset her. Her nerves are velly bad just now. M. Verdurin was particularly pleased that you were coming to dine this evening, because he knew that it would be a great distraction for Mme. Verdurin," said the Princess, forgetting her presence of having never heard my name before. "I think that it will be as well not to say *anything* in front of Mme. Verdurin," the Princess added. "Ah! I am glad you warned me," Brichot artlessly replied. "I shall pass on your suggestion to Cottard." The carriage stopped for a moment. It moved on again, but the sound that the wheels had been making in the village street had ceased. We had turned into the main avenue of la

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

Raspelière where M. Verdurin stood waiting for us upon the steps. "I did well to put on a dinner-jacket," he said, observing with pleasure that the faithful had put on theirs, "since I have such smart gentlemen in my party." And as I apologised for not having changed: "Why, that's quite all right. We're all friends here. I should be delighted to offer you one of my own dinner-jackets, but it wouldn't fit you." The handclasp throbbing with emotion which, as he entered the hall of la Raspelière, and by way of condolence at the death of the pianist, Brichot gave our host elicited no response from the latter. I told him how greatly I admired the scenery. "Ah! All the better, and you've seen nothing, we must take you round. Why not come and spend a week or two here, the air is excellent." Brichot was afraid that his handclasp had not been understood. "Ah! Poor Dechambre!" he said, but in an undertone, in case Mme. Verdurin was within earshot. "It is terrible," replied M. Verdurin lightly. "So young," Brichot pursued the point. Annoyed at being detained over these futilities, M. Verdurin replied in a hasty tone and with an embittered groan, not of grief but of irritated impatience: "Why yes, of course, but what's to be done about it, it's no use crying over spilt milk, talking about him won't bring him back to life, will it?" And, his civility returning with his joviality: "Come along, my good Brichot, get your things off quickly. We have a bouillabaisse which mustn't be kept waiting. But, in heaven's name, don't start talking about Dechambre to Madame Verdurin. You know that she always hides her feelings, but she is quite morbidly sensitive. I give you my word, when she heard that Dechambre was dead, she

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

almost cried," said M. Verdurin in a tone of profound irony. One might have concluded, from hearing him speak, that it implied a form of insanity to regret the death of a friend of thirty years' standing, and on the other hand one gathered that the perpetual union of M. Verdurin and his wife did not preclude his constantly criticising her and her frequently irritating him. "If you mention it to her, she will go and make herself ill again. It is deplorable, three weeks after her bronchitis. When that happens, it is I who have to be sicknurse. You can understand that I have had more than enough of it. Grieve for Dechambre's fate in your heart as much as you like. Think of him, but do not speak about him. I was very fond of Dechambre, but you cannot blame me for being fonder still of my wife. Here's Cottard, now, you can ask him." And indeed he knew that a family doctor can do many little services, such as prescribing that one must not give way to grief.

The docile Cottard had said to the Mistress: "Upset yourself like that, and to-morrow you will *give me* a temperature of 102," as he might have said to the cook: "To-morrow you will give me a *riz de veau*." Medicine, when it fails to cure the sick, busies itself with changing the sense of verbs and pronouns.

M. Verdurin was glad to find that Saniette, notwithstanding the snubs that he had had to endure two days earlier, had not deserted the little nucleus. And indeed Mme. Verdurin and her husband had acquired, in their idleness, cruel instincts for which the great occasions, occurring too rarely, no longer sufficed. They had succeeded in effecting a breach between Odette and Swann, between Brichot and his mistress. They would try it

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

again with some one else, that was understood. But the opportunity did not present itself every day. Whereas, thanks to his shuddering sensibility, his timorous and quickly aroused shyness, Saniette provided them with a whipping-block for every day in the year. And so, for fear of his failing them, they took care always to invite him with friendly and persuasive words, such as the bigger boys at school, the old soldiers in a regiment address to a recruit whom they are anxious to beguile so that they may get him into their clutches, with the sole object of flattering him for the moment and bullying him when he can no longer escape. "Whatever you do," Brichot reminded Cottard, who had not heard what M. Verdurin was saying, "mum's the word before Mme. Verdurin. Have no fear, O Cottard, you are dealing with a sage, as Theocritus says. Besides, M. Verdurin is right, what is the use of lamentations," he went on, for, being capable of assimilating forms of speech and the ideas which they suggested to him, but having no finer perception, he had admired in M. Verdurin's remarks the most courageous stoicism. "All the same, it is a great talent that has gone from the world." "What, are you still talking about Dechambre," said M. Verdurin, who had gone on ahead of us, and, seeing that we were not following him, had turned back. "Listen," he said to Brichot, "nothing is gained by exaggeration. The fact of his being dead is no excuse for making him out a genius, which he was not. He played well, I admit, and what is more, he was in his proper element here; transplanted, he ceased to exist. My wife was infatuated with him and made his reputation. You know what she is. I will go farther, in the interest of his own reputation he

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

has died at the right moment, he is done to a turn, as the demoiselles de Caen, grilled according to the incomparable recipe of Pampilles, are going to be, I hope (unless you keep us standing here all night with your jeremiads in this Kasbah exposed to all the winds of heaven). You don't seriously expect us all to die of hunger because Dechambre is dead, when for the last year he was obliged to practise scales before giving a concert; to recover for the moment, and for the moment only, the suppleness of his wrists. Besides, you are going to hear this evening, or at any rate to meet, for the rascal is too fond of deserting his art, after dinner, for the 'card-table, somebody who is a far greater artist than Dechambre, a youngster whom my wife has discovered" (as she had discovered Dechambre, and Paderewski, and everybody else): "Morel. He has not arrived yet, the devil. He is coming with an old friend of his family whom he has picked up, and who bores him to tears, but otherwise, not to get into trouble with his father, he would have been obliged to stay down at Doncières and keep him company: the Baron de Charlus." The faithful entered the drawing-room. M. Verdurin, who had remained behind with me while I took off my things, took my arm by way of a joke, as one's host does at a dinner-party when there is no lady for one to take in. "Did you have a pleasant journey?" "Yes, M. Brichot told me things which interested me greatly," said I, thinking of the etymologies, and because I had heard that the Verdurins greatly admired Brichot. "I am surprised to hear that he told you anything," said M. Verdurin, "he is such a retiring man, and talks so little about the things he knows." This compliment did not strike me as being very apt. "He seems charming,"

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

I remarked. "Exquisite, delicious, not the sort of man you meet every day, such a light, fantastic touch, my wife adores him, and so do I!" replied M. Verdurin in an exaggerated tone, as though repeating a lesson. Only then did I grasp that what he had said to me about Brichot was ironical. And I asked myself whether M. Verdurin, since those far-off days of which I had heard reports, had not shaken off the yoke of his wife's tutelage.

The sculptor was greatly astonished to learn that the Verdurins were willing to have M. de Charlus in their house. Whereas in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where M. de Charlus was so well known, nobody ever referred to his morals (of which most people had no suspicion, others remained doubtful, crediting him rather with intense but Platonic friendships, with behaving imprudently, while the enlightened few strenuously denied, shrugging their shoulders, any insinuation upon which some malicious Gallardon might venture), those morals, the nature of which was known perhaps to a few intimate friends, were, on the other hand, being denounced daily far from the circle in which he moved, just as, at times, the sound of artillery fire is audible only beyond a zone of silence. Moreover, in those professional and artistic circles where he was regarded as the typical instance of inversion, his great position in society, his noble origin were completely unknown, by a process analogous to that which, among the people of Rumania, has brought it about that the name of Ronsard is known as that of a great nobleman, while his poetical work is unknown there. Not only that, the Rumanian estimate of Ronsard's nobility is founded upon an error. Similarly, if in the world of painters and actors M. de Charlus had such an

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

evil reputation, that was due to their confusing him with a certain Comte Leblois de Charlus who was not even related to him (or, if so, the connexion was extremely remote), and who had been arrested, possibly by mistake, in the course of a police raid which had become historic. In short, all the stories related of our M. de Charlus referred to the other. Many professionals swore that they had had relations with M. de Charlus, and did so in good faith, believing that the false M. de Charlus was the true one, the false one possibly encouraging, partly from an affectation of nobility, partly to conceal his vice, a confusion which to the true one (the Baron whom we already know) was for a long time damaging, and afterwards, when he had begun to go down the hill, became a convenience, for it enabled him likewise to say: "That is not myself." And in the present instance it was not he to whom the rumours referred. Finally, what enhanced the falsehood of the reports of an actual fact (the Baron's tendencies), he had had an intimate and perfectly pure friendship with an author who, in the theatrical world, had for some reason acquired a similar reputation which he in no way deserved. When they were seen together at a first night, people would say: "You see," just as it was supposed that the Duchesse de Guermantes had immoral relations with the Princesse de Parme; an indestructible legend, for it would be disproved only in the presence of those two great ladies themselves, to which the people who repeated it would presumably never come any nearer than by staring at them through their glasses in the theatre and slandering them to the occupant of the next stall. Given M. de Charlus's morals, the sculptor concluded all the more readily that the Baron's social posi-

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

tion must be equally low, since he had no sort of information whatever as to the family to which M. de Charlus belonged, his title or his name. Just as Cottard imagined that everybody knew that the degree of Doctor of Medicine implied nothing, the title of Consultant to a Hospital meant something, so people in society are mistaken when they suppose that everybody has the same idea of the social importance of their name as they themselves and the other people of their set.

The Prince d'Agrigente was regarded as a swindler by a club servant to whom he owed twenty-five louis, and regained his importance only in the Faubourg Saint-Germain where he had three sisters who were Duchesses, for it is not among the humble people in whose eyes he is of small account, but among the smart people who know what is what, that the great nobleman creates an effect. M. de Charlus, for that matter, was to learn in the course of the evening that his host had the vaguest ideas about the most illustrious ducal families.

Certain that the Verdurins were making a grave mistake in allowing an individual of tarnished reputation to be admitted to so "select" a household as theirs, the sculptor felt it his duty to take the Mistress aside. "You are entirely mistaken, besides I never pay any attention to those tales, and even if it were true, I may be allowed to point out that it could hardly compromise *me!*" replied Mme. Verdurin, furious, for, Morel being the principal feature of the Wednesdays, the chief thing for her was not to give any offence to him. As for Cottard, he could not express an opinion, for he had asked leave to go upstairs for a moment to "do a little job" in the *buen*

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

retiro, and after that, in M. Verdurin's bedroom, to write an extremely urgent letter for a patient.

A great publisher from Paris who had come to call, expecting to be invited to stay to dinner, withdrew abruptly, quickly, realising that he was not smart enough for the little clan. He was a tall, stout man, very dark, with a studious and somewhat cutting air. He reminded one of an ebony paper-knife.

Mme. Verdurin who, to welcome us in her immense drawing-room, in which displays of grasses, poppies, field-flowers, plucked only that morning, alternated with a similar theme painted on the walls, two centuries earlier, by an artist of exquisite taste, had risen for a moment from a game of cards which she was playing with an old friend, begged us to excuse her for just one minute while she finished her game, talking to us the while. What I told her about my impressions did not, however, seem altogether to please her. For one thing I was shocked to observe that she and her husband came indoors every day long before the hour of those sunsets which were considered so fine when seen from that cliff, and finer still from the terrace of la Raspelière, and which I would have travelled miles to see. "Yes, it's incomparable," said Mme. Verdurin carelessly, with a glance at the huge windows which gave the room a wall of glass. "Even though we have it always in front of us, we never grow tired of it," and she turned her attention back to her cards. Now my very enthusiasm made me exacting. I expressed my regret that I could not see from the drawing-room the rocks of Darnetal, which, Elstir had told me, were quite lovely at that hour, when they reflected so many colours. "Ah! You can't see them from here,

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

you would have to go to the end of the park, to the 'view of the bay.' From the seat there, you can take in the whole panorama. But you can't go there by yourself, you will lose your way. I can take you there, if you like," she added kindly. "No, no, you are not satisfied with the illness you had the other day, you want to make yourself ill again. He will come back, he can see the view of the bay another time." I did not insist, and understood that it was enough for the Verdurins to know that this sunset made its way into their drawing-room or dining-room, like a magnificent painting, like a priceless Japanese enamel, justifying the high rent that they were paying for la Raspelière, with plate and linen, but a thing to which they rarely raised their eyes; the important thing, here, for them was to live comfortably, to take drives, to feed well, to talk, to entertain agreeable friends whom they provided with amusing games of billiards, good meals, merry tea-parties. I noticed, however, later on, how intelligently they had learned to know the district, taking their guests for excursions as "novel" as the music to which they made them listen. The part which the flowers of la Raspelière, the roads by the sea's edge, the old houses, the undiscovered churches, played in the life of M. Verdurin was so great that those people who saw him only in Paris and who, themselves, substituted for the life by the seaside and in the country the refinements of life in town could barely understand the idea that he himself formed of his own life, or the importance that his pleasures gave him in his own eyes. This importance was further enhanced by the fact that the Verdurins were convinced that la Raspelière, which they hoped to purchase, was a property without its match in

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the world. This superiority which their self-esteem made them attribute to *la Raspelière* justified in their eyes my enthusiasm which, but for that, would have annoyed them slightly, because of the disappointments which it involved (like my disappointment when long ago I had first listened to *Berma*) and which I frankly admitted to them.

"I hear the carriage coming back," the Mistress suddenly murmured. Let us state briefly that *Mme. Verdurin*, quite apart from the inevitable changes due to increasing years, no longer resembled what she had been at the time when *Swann* and *Odette* used to listen to the little phrase in her house. Even when she heard it played, she was no longer obliged to assume the air of attenuated admiration which she used to assume then, for that had become her normal expression. Under the influence of the countless neuralgias which the music of *Bach*, *Wagner*, *Vinteuil*, *Debussy* had given her, *Mme. Verdurin's* brow had assumed enormous proportions, like limbs that are finally crippled by rheumatism. Her temples, suggestive of a pair of beautiful, pain-stricken, milk-white spheres, in which *Harmony* rolled endlessly, flung back upon either side her silvered tresses, and proclaimed, on the Mistress's behalf, without any need for her to say a word: "I know what is in store for me to-night." Her features no longer took the trouble to formulate successively aesthetic impressions of undue violence, for they had themselves become their permanent expression on a countenance ravaged and superb. This attitude of resignation to the ever impending sufferings inflicted by *Beauty*, and of the courage that was required to make her dress for dinner when she had barely recovered from the effects of the last sonata, had the result that *Mme.*

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

Verdurin, even when listening to the most heartrending music, preserved a disdainfully impassive countenance, and actually withdrew into retirement to swallow her two spoonfuls of aspirin.

"Why, yes, here they are!" M. Verdurin cried with relief when he saw the door open to admit Morel, followed by M. de Charlus. The latter, to whom dining with the Verdurins meant not so much going into society as going into questionable surroundings, was as frightened as a schoolboy making his way for the first time into a brothel with the utmost deference towards its mistress. Moreover the persistent desire that M. de Charlus felt to appear virile and frigid was overcome (when he appeared in the open doorway) by those traditional ideas of politeness which are awakened as soon as shyness destroys an artificial attitude and makes an appeal to the resources of the subconscious. When it is a Charlus, whether he be noble or plebeian, that is stirred by such a sentiment of instinctive and atavistic politeness to strangers, it is always the spirit of a relative of the female sex, attendant like a goddess, or incarnate as a double, that undertakes to introduce him into a strange drawing-room and to mould his attitude until he comes face to face with his hostess. Thus a young painter, brought up by a godly, Protestant, female cousin, will enter a room, his head aslant and quivering, his eyes raised to the ceiling, his hands gripping an invisible muff, the remembered shape of which and its real and tutelary presence will help the frightened artist to cross without agoraphobia the yawning abyss between the hall and the inner drawing-room. Thus it was that the pious relative, whose memory is helping him to-day, used to enter a room years ago, and

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

with so plaintive an air that one was asking oneself what calamity she had come to announce, when from her first words one realised, as now in the case of the painter, that she had come to pay an after-dinner call. By virtue of the same law, which requires that life, in the interests of the still unfulfilled act, shall bring into play, utilise, adulterate, in a perpetual prostitution, the most respectable, it may be the most sacred, sometimes only the most innocent legacies from the past, and albeit in this instance it engendered a different aspect, the one of Mme. Cottard's nephews who distressed his family by his effeminate ways and the company he kept would always make a joyous entry as though he had a surprise in store for you or were going to inform you that he had been left a fortune, radiant with a happiness which it would have been futile to ask him to explain, it being due to his unconscious heredity and his misplaced sex. He walked upon tiptoe, was no doubt himself astonished that he was not holding a cardcase, offered you his hand parting his lips as he had seen his aunt part hers, and his uneasy glance was directed at the mirror in which he seemed to wish to make certain, albeit he was bare-headed, whether his hat, as Mme. Cottard had once inquired of Swann, was not askew. As for M. de Charlus, whom the society in which he had lived furnished, at this critical moment, with different examples, with other patterns of affability, and above all with the maxim that one must, in certain cases, when dealing with people of humble rank, bring into play and make use of one's rarest graces, which one normally holds in reserve, it was with a flutter, archly, and with the same sweep with which a skirt would have enlarged and impeded his waddling motion that he advanced

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

upon Mme. Verdurin with so flattered and honoured an air that one would have said that to be taken to her house was for him a supreme favour. One would have thought that it was Mme. de Marsantes who was entering the room, so prominent at that moment was the woman whom a mistake on the part of Nature had enshrined in the body of M. de Charlus. It was true that the Baron had made every effort to obliterate this mistake and to assume a masculine appearance. But no sooner had he succeeded than, he having in the meantime kept the same tastes, this habit of looking at things through a woman's eyes gave him a fresh feminine appearance, due this time not to heredity but to his own way of living. And as he had gradually come to regard even social questions from the feminine point of view, and without noticing it, for it is not only by dint of lying to other people, but also by lying to oneself that one ceases to be aware that one is lying, albeit he had called upon his body to manifest (at the moment of his entering the Verdurins' drawing-room) all the courtesy of a great nobleman, that body which had fully understood what M. de Charlus had ceased to apprehend, displayed, to such an extent that the Baron would have deserved the epithet "ladylike," all the attractions of a great lady. Not that there need be any connexion between the appearance of M. de Charlus and the fact that sons, who do not always take after their fathers, even without being invert, and though they go after women, may consummate upon their faces the profanation of their mothers. But we need not consider here a subject that deserves a chapter to itself: the Profanation of the Mother.

Albeit other reasons dictated this transformation of M.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

de Charlus, and purely physical ferments set his material substance "working" and made his body pass gradually into the category of women's bodies, nevertheless the change that we record here was of spiritual origin. By dint of supposing yourself to be ill you become ill, grow thin, are too weak to rise from your bed, suffer from nervous enteritis. By dint of thinking tenderly of men you become a woman, and an imaginary spirit hampers your movements. The obsession, just as in the other instance it affects your health, may in this instance alter your sex. Morel, who accompanied him, came to shake hands with me. From that first moment, owing to a two-fold change that occurred in him I formed (alas, I was not warned in time to act upon it!) a bad impression of him. I have said that Morel, having risen above his father's menial status, was generally pleased to indulge in a contemptuous familiarity. He had talked to me on the day when he brought me the photographs without once addressing me as *Monsieur*, treating me as an inferior. What was my surprise at *Mme. Verdurin's* to see him bow very low before me, and before me alone, and to hear, before he had even uttered a syllable to anyone else, words of respect, most respectful—such words as I thought could not possibly flow from his pen or fall from his lips—addressed to myself. I at once suspected that he had some favour to ask of me. Taking me aside a minute later: "*Monsieur* would be doing me a very great service," he said to me, going so far this time as to address me in the third person, "by keeping from *Mme. Verdurin* and her guests the nature of the profession that my father practised with his uncle. It would be best to say that he was, in your family, the agent for estates so

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

considerable as to put him almost on a level with your parents." Morel's request annoyed me intensely because it obliged me to magnify not his father's position, in which I took not the slightest interest, but the wealth—the apparent wealth of my own, which I felt to be absurd. But he appeared so unhappy, so pressing, that I could not refuse him. "No, before dinner," he said in an imploring tone, "Monsieur can easily find some excuse for taking Mme. Verdurin aside." This was what, in the end, I did, trying to enhance to the best of my ability the distinction of Morel's father, without unduly exaggerating the "style," the "worldly goods" of my own family. It went like a letter through the post, notwithstanding the astonishment of Mme. Verdurin, who had had a nodding acquaintance with my grandfather. And as she had no tact, hated family life (that dissolvent of the little nucleus), after telling me that she remembered, long ago, seeing my great-grandfather, and after speaking of him as of somebody who was almost an idiot, who would have been incapable of understanding the little group, and who, to use her expression, "was not one of us," she said to me: "Families are such a bore, the only thing is to get right away from them;" and at once proceeded to tell me of a trait in my great-grandfather's character of which I was unaware, although I might have suspected it at home (I had never seen him, but they frequently spoke of him), his remarkable stinginess (in contrast to the somewhat excessive generosity of my great-uncle, the friend of the lady in pink and Morel's father's employer): "Why, of course, if your grandparents had such a grand agent, that only shews that there are all sorts of people in a family. Your grandfather's father was so stingy

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

that, at the end of his life, when he was almost half-witted—between you and me, he was never anything very special, you are worth the whole lot of them—he could not bring himself to pay a penny for his ride on the omnibus. So that they were obliged to have him followed by somebody who paid his fare for him, and to let the old miser think that his friend M. de Persigny, the Cabinet Minister, had given him a permit to travel free on the omnibuses. But I am delighted to hear that *our* Morel's father held such a good position. I was under the impression that he had been a schoolmaster, but that's nothing, I must have misunderstood. In any case, it makes not the slightest difference, for I must tell you that here we appreciate only true worth, the personal contribution, what I call the participation. Provided that a person is artistic, provided in a word that he is one of the brotherhood, nothing else matters." The way in which Morel was one of the brotherhood was—so far as I have been able to discover—that he was sufficiently fond of both women and men to satisfy either sex with the fruits of his experience of the other. But what it is essential to note here is that as soon as I had given him my word that I would speak on his behalf to Mme. Verdurin, as soon, moreover, as I had actually done so, and without any possibility of subsequent retraction, Morel's "respect" for myself vanished as though by magic, the formal language of respect melted away, and indeed for some time he avoided me, contriving to appear contemptuous of me, so that if Mme. Verdurin wanted me to give him a message, to ask him to play something, he would continue to talk to one of the faithful, then move on to another, changing his seat if I approached him.

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

The others were obliged to tell him three or four times that I had spoken to him, after which he would reply, with an air of constraint, briefly, that is to say unless we were by ourselves. When that happened, he was expansive, friendly, for there was a charming side to him. I concluded all the same from this first evening that his must be a vile nature, that he would not, at a pinch, shrink from any act of meanness, was incapable of gratitude. In which he resembled the majority of mankind. But inasmuch as I had inherited a strain of my grandmother's nature, and enjoyed the diversity of other people without expecting anything of them or resenting anything that they did, I overlooked his baseness, rejoiced in his gaiety when it was in evidence, and indeed in what I believe to have been a genuine affection on his part when, having gone the whole circuit of his false ideas of human nature, he realised (with a jerk, for he shewed strange reversions to a blind and primitive savagery) that my kindness to him was disinterested, that my indulgence arose not from a want of perception but from what he called goodness; and, more important still, I was enraptured by his art which indeed was little more than an admirable virtuosity, but which made me (without his being in the intellectual sense of the word a real musician) hear again or for the first time so much good music. Moreover a manager—M. de Charlus (whom I had not suspected of such talents, albeit Mme. de Guermantes, who had known him a very different person in their younger days, asserted that he had composed a sonata for her, painted a fan, and so forth), modest in regard to his true merits, but possessing talents of the first order, contrived to place this virtuosity at the service of a versa-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

tile artistic sense which increased it tenfold. Imagine a merely skilful performer in the Russian ballet, formed, educated, developed in all directions by M. Diaghileff.

I had just given Mme. Verdurin the message with which Morel had charged me and was talking to M. de Charlus about Saint-Loup, when Cottard burst into the room announcing, as though the house were on fire, that the Cambremers had arrived. Mme. Verdurin, not wishing to appear before strangers such as M. de Charlus (whom Cottard had not seen) and myself to attach any great importance to the arrival of the Cambremers, did not move, made no response to the announcement of these tidings, and merely said to the doctor, fanning herself gracefully, and adopting the tone of a Marquise in the *Théâtre-Français*: "The Baron has just been telling us. . . ." This was too much for Cottard! Less abruptly than he would have done in the old days, for learning and high positions had added weight to his utterance, but with the emotion, nevertheless, which he recaptured at the Verdurins', he exclaimed: "A Baron! What Baron? Where's the Baron?" staring round the room with an astonishment that bordered on incredulity. Mme. Verdurin, with the affected indifference of a hostess when a servant has, in front of her guests, broken a valuable glass, and with the artificial, high-falutin tone of a conservatoire prize-winner acting in a play by the younger Dumas, replied, pointing with her fan to Morel's patron: "Why, the Baron de Charlus, to whom let me introduce you, M. le Professeur Cottard." Mme. Verdurin was, for that matter, by no means sorry to have an opportunity of playing the leading lady. M. de Charlus proffered two fingers which the Professor clasped with the

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

kindly smile of a "Prince of Science." But he stopped short upon seeing the Cambremers enter the room, while M. de Charlus led me into a corner to tell me something, not without feeling my muscles, which is a German habit. M. de Cambremer bore no resemblance to the old Marquise. To anyone who had only heard of him, or of letters written by him, well and forcibly expressed, his personal appearance was startling. No doubt, one would grow accustomed to it. But his nose had chosen to place itself aslant above his mouth, perhaps the only crooked line, among so many, which one would never have thought of tracing upon his face, and one that indicated a vulgar stupidity, aggravated still further by the proximity of a Norman complexion on cheeks that were like two ripe apples. It is possible that the eyes of M. de Cambremer retained behind their eyelids a trace of the sky of the Cotentin, so soft upon sunny days when the wayfarer amuses himself in watching, drawn up by the roadside, and counting in their hundreds the shadows of the poplars, but those eyelids, heavy, bleared and drooping, would have prevented the least flash of intelligence from escaping. And so, discouraged by the meagreness of that azure glance, one returned to the big crooked nose. By a transposition of the senses, M. de Cambremer looked at you with his nose. This nose of his was not ugly, it was if anything too handsome, too bold, too proud of its own importance. Arched, polished, gleaming, brand new, it was amply prepared to atone for the inadequacy of his eyes. Unfortunately, if the eyes are sometimes the organ through which our intelligence is revealed, the nose (to leave out of account the intimate solidarity and the unsuspected repercussion of

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

one feature upon the rest), the nose is generally the organ in which stupidity is most readily displayed.

The propriety of the dark clothes which M. de Cambremer invariably wore, even in the morning, might well reassure those who were dazzled and exasperated by the insolent brightness of the seaside attire of people whom they did not know; still it was impossible to understand why the chief magistrate's wife should have declared with an air of discernment and authority, as a person who knows far more than you about the high society of Alençon, that on seeing M. de Cambremer one immediately felt oneself, even before one knew who he was, in the presence of a man of supreme distinction, of a man of perfect breeding, a change from the sort of person one saw at Balbec, a man in short in whose company one could breathe freely. He was to her, stifled by all those Balbec tourists who did not know her world, like a bottle of smelling salts. It seemed to me on the contrary that he was one of the people whom my grandmother would at once have set down as "all wrong," and that, as she had no conception of snobbishness, she would no doubt have been stupefied that he could have succeeded in winning the hand of Mlle. Legrandin, who must surely be difficult to please, having a brother who was "so refined." At best one might have said of M. de Cambremer's plebeian ugliness that it was redolent of the soil and preserved a very ancient local tradition; one was reminded, on examining his faulty features, which one would have liked to correct, of those names of little Norman towns as to the etymology of which my friend the curé was mistaken because the peasants, mispronouncing the names, or having misunderstood the Latin or Norman words that underlay

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

them, have finally fixed in a barbarism to be found already in the cartularies, as Brichot would have said, a wrong meaning and a fault of pronunciation. Life in these little old towns may, for all that, be pleasant enough, and M. de Cambremer must have had his good points, for if it was in a mother's nature that the old Marquise should prefer her son to her daughter-in-law, on the other hand, she, who had other children, of whom two at least were not devoid of merit, was often heard to declare that the Marquis was, in her opinion, the best of the family. During the short time he had spent in the army, his mess-mates, finding Cambremer too long a name to pronounce, had given him the nickname Cancan, implying a flow of chatter, which he in no way merited. He knew how to brighten a dinner-party to which he was invited by saying when the fish (even if it were stale) or the entrée came in: "I say, that looks a fine animal." And his wife, who had adopted upon entering the family everything that she supposed to form part of their customs, put herself on the level of her husband's friends and perhaps sought to please him, like a mistress, and as though she had been involved in his bachelor existence, by saying in a careless tone when she was speaking of him to officers: "You shall see Cancan presently. Cancan has gone to Balbec, but he will be back this evening." She was furious at having compromised herself by coming to the Verdurins' and had done so only upon the entreaties of her mother-in-law and husband, in the hope of renewing the lease. But, being less well-bred than they, she made no secret of the ulterior motive and for the last fortnight had been making fun of this dinner-party to her women friends. "You know we are going to dine with our ten-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

ants. That will be well worth an increased rent. As a matter of fact, I am rather curious to see what they have done to our poor old *la Raspelière*" (as though she had been born in the house, and would find there all her old family associations). "Our old keeper told me only yesterday that you wouldn't know the place. I can't bear to think of all that must be going on there. I am sure we shall have to have the whole place disinfected before we move in again." She arrived haughty and morose, with the air of a great lady whose castle, owing to a state of war, is occupied by the enemy, but who nevertheless feels herself at home and makes a point of shewing the conquerors that they are intruding. Mme. de Cambremer could not see me at first for I was in a bay at the side of the room with M. de Charlus, who was telling me that he had heard from Morel that Morel's father had been an "agent" in my family, and that he, Charlus, credited me with sufficient intelligence and magnanimity (a term common to himself and Swann) to forego the mean and ignoble pleasure which vulgar little idiots (I was warned) would not have failed, in my place, to give themselves by revealing to our hosts details which they might regard as derogatory. "The mere fact that I take an interest in him and extend my protection over him, gives him a pre-eminence and wipes out the past," the Baron concluded. As I listened to him and promised the silence which I would have kept even without any hope of being considered in return intelligent and magnanimous, I was looking at Mme. de Cambremer. And I had difficulty in recognising the melting, savoury morsel which I had had beside me the other afternoon at tea-time, on the terrace at Balbec, in the Norman rock-cake

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

that I now saw, hard as a rock, in which the faithful would in vain have tried to set their teeth. Irritated in anticipation by the knowledge that her husband inherited his mother's simple kindness, which would make him assume a flattered expression whenever one of the faithful was presented to him, anxious however to perform her duty as a leader of society, when Brichot had been named to her she decided to make him and her husband acquainted, as she had seen her more fashionable friends do, but, anger or pride prevailing over the desire to shew her knowledge of the world, she said, not, as she ought to have said: "Allow me to introduce my husband," but: "I introduce you to my husband," holding aloft thus the banner of the Cambremers, without avail, for her husband bowed as low before Brichot as she had expected. But all Mme. de Cambremer's ill humour vanished in an instant when her eye fell on M. de Charlus, whom she knew by sight. Never had she succeeded in obtaining an introduction, even at the time of her intimacy with Swann. For as M. de Charlus always sided with the woman, with his sister-in-law against M. de Guermantes's mistresses, with Odette, at that time still unmarried, but an old flame of Swann's, against the new, he had, as a stern defender of morals and faithful protector of homes, given Odette—and kept—the promise that he would never allow himself to be presented to Mme. de Cambremer. She had certainly never guessed that it was at the Verdurins' that she was at length to meet this unapproachable person. M. de Cambremer knew that this was a great joy to her, so great that he himself was moved by it and looked at his wife with an air that implied: "You are glad now you decided to come, aren't you?" He spoke very little,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

knowing that he had married a superior woman. "I, all unworthy," he would say at every moment, and spontaneously quoted a fable of La Fontaine and one of Florian which seemed to him to apply to his ignorance, and at the same time to enable him, beneath the outward form of a contemptuous flattery, to shew the men of science who were not members of the Jockey that one might be a sportsman and yet have read fables. The unfortunate thing was that he knew only two of them. And so they kept cropping up. Mme. de Cambremer was no fool, but she had a number of extremely irritating habits. With her the corruption of names bore absolutely no trace of aristocratic disdain. She was not the person to say, like the Duchesse de Guermantes (whom the mere fact of her birth ought to have preserved even more than Mme. de Cambremer from such an absurdity), with a pretence of not remembering the unfashionable name (albeit it is now that of one of the women whom it is most difficult to approach) of Julien de Monchâteau: "a little Madame . . . Pica della Mirandola." No, when Mme. de Cambremer said a name wrong it was out of kindness of heart, so as not to appear to know some damaging fact, and when, in her sincerity, she admitted it, she tried to conceal it by altering it. If, for instance, she was defending a woman, she would try to conceal the fact, while determined not to lie to the person who had asked her to tell the truth, that Madame So-and-so was at the moment the mistress of M. Sylvain Lévy, and would say: "No . . . I know absolutely nothing about her, I fancy that people used to charge her with having inspired a passion in a gentleman whose name I don't know, something like Cahn, Kohn, Kuhn; anyhow, I be-

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

lieve the gentleman has been dead for years and that there was never anything between them." This is an analogous, but contrary process to that adopted by liars who think that if they alter their statement of what they have been doing when they make it to a mistress or merely to another man, their listener will not immediately see that the expression (like her Cahn, Kohn, Kuhn) is interpolated, is of a different texture from the rest of the conversation, has a double meaning.

Mme. Verdurin whispered in her husband's ear: "Shall I offer my arm to the Baron de Charlus? As you will have Mme. de Cambremer on your right, we might divide the honours." "No," said M. Verdurin, "since the other is higher in rank" (meaning that M. de Cambremer was a Marquis), "M. de Charlus is, strictly speaking, his inferior." "Very well, I shall put him beside the Princess." And Mme. Verdurin introduced Mme. Sherbatoff to M. de Charlus; each of them bowed in silence, with an air of knowing all about the other and of promising a mutual secrecy. M. Verdurin introduced me to M. de Cambremer. Before he had even begun to speak in his loud and slightly stammering voice, his tall figure and high complexion displayed in their oscillation the martial hesitation of a commanding officer who tries to put you at your ease and says: "I have heard about you, I shall see what can be done; your punishment shall be remitted; we don't thirst for blood here; it will be all right." Then, as he shook my hand: "I think you know my mother," he said to me. The word "think" seemed to him appropriate to the discretion of a first meeting, but not to imply any uncertainty, for he went on: "I have a note for you from her." M. de Cambremer took a childish pleasure in

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

revisiting a place where he had lived for so long. "I am at home again," he said to Mme. Verdurin, while his eyes marvelled at recognising the flowers painted on panels over the doors, and the marble busts on their high pedestals. He might, all the same, have felt himself at sea, for Mme. Verdurin had brought with her a quantity of fine old things of her own. In this respect, Mme. Verdurin, while regarded by the Cambremers as having turned everything upside down, was not revolutionary but intelligently conservative in a sense which they did not understand. They were thus wrong in accusing her of hating the old house and of degrading it by hanging plain cloth curtains instead of their rich plush, like an ignorant parish priest reproaching a diocesan architect with putting back in its place the old carved wood which the cleric had thrown on the rubbish heap, and had seen fit to replace with ornaments purchased in the Place Saint-Sulpice. Furthermore, a herb garden was beginning to take the place, in front of the mansion, of the borders that were the pride not merely of the Cambremers but of their gardener. The latter, who regarded the Cambremers as his sole masters, and groaned beneath the yoke of the Verdurins, as though the place were under occupation for the moment by an invading army, went in secret to unburden his griefs to its dispossessed mistress, grew irate at the scorn that was heaped upon his araucarias, begonias, house-leeks, double dahlias, and at anyone's daring in so grand a place to grow such common plants as camomile and maidenhair. Mme. Verdurin felt this silent opposition and had made up her mind, if she took a long lease of la Raspelière or even bought the place, to make one of her conditions the dismissal of the gardener,

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

by whom his old mistress, on the contrary, set great store. He had worked for her without payment, when times were bad, he adored her; but by that odd multiformity of opinion which we find in the lower orders, among whom the most profound moral scorn is embedded in the most passionate admiration, which in turn overlaps old and undying grudges, he used often to say of Mme. de Cambremer who, in '70, in a house that she owned in the East of France, surprised by the invasion, had been obliged to endure for a month the contact of the Germans: "What many people can't forgive Mme. la Marquise is that during the war she took the side of the Prussians and even had them to stay in her house. At any other time, I could understand it; but in war time, she ought not to have done it. It is not right." So that he was faithful to her unto death, venerated her for her goodness, and firmly believed that she had been guilty of treason. Mme. Verdurin was annoyed that M. de Cambremer should pretend to feel so much at home at la Raspelière. "You must notice a good many changes, all the same," she replied. "For one thing there were those big bronze Barbedienne devils and some horrid little plush chairs which I packed off at once to the attic, though even that is too good a place for them." After this bitter retort to M. de Cambremer, she offered him her arm to go in to dinner. He hesitated for a moment, saying to himself: "I can't, really, go in before M. de Charlus." But supposing the other to be an old friend of the house, seeing that he was not set in the post of honour, he decided to take the arm that was offered him and told Mme. Verdurin how proud he felt to be admitted into the symposium (so it was that he styled the little nucleus, not

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

without a smile of satisfaction at his knowledge of the term). Cottard, who was seated next to M. de Charius, beamed at him through his glass, to make his acquaintance and to break the ice, with a series of winks far more insistent than they would have been in the old days, and not interrupted by fits of shyness. And these engaging glances, enhanced by the smile that accompanied them, were no longer dammed by the glass but overflowed on all sides. The Baron, who readily imagined people of his own kind everywhere, had no doubt that Cottard was one, and was making eyes at him. At once he turned on the Professor the cold shoulder of the invert, as contemptuous of those whom he attracts as he is ardent in pursuit of such as attract him. No doubt, albeit each one of us speaks mendaciously of the pleasure, always refused him by destiny, of being loved, it is a general law, the application of which is by no means confined to the Charlus type, that the person whom we do not love and who does love us seems to us quite intolerable. To such a person, to a woman of whom we say not that she loves us but that she bores us, we prefer the society of any other, who has neither her charm, nor her looks, nor her brains. She will recover these, in our estimation, only when she has ceased to love us. In this light, we might see only the transposition, into odd terms, of this universal rule in the irritation aroused in an invert by a man who displeases him and runs after him. And so, whereas the ordinary man seeks to conceal what he feels, the invert is implacable in making it felt by the man who provokes it, as he would certainly not make it felt by a woman, M. de Charlus for instance by the Princesse de Guermantes, whose passion for him bored him, but flat-

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

tered him. But when they see another man shew a peculiar liking for them, then, whether because they fail to realise that this liking is the same as their own, or because it annoys them to be reminded that this liking, which they glorify so long as it is they themselves that feel it, is regarded as a vice, or from a desire to rehabilitate themselves by a sensational display in circumstances in which it costs them nothing, or from a fear of being unmasked which they at once recover as soon as desire no longer leads them blindfold from one imprudence to another, or from rage at being subjected, by the equivocal attitude of another person, to the injury which, by their own attitude, if that other person attracted them, they would not be afraid to inflict on him, the men who do not in the least mind following a young man for miles, never taking their eyes off him in the theatre, even if he is with friends, and there is therefore a danger of their compromising him with them, may be heard, if a man who does not attract them merely looks at them, to say: "Sir, for what do you take me?" (simply because he takes them for what they are) "I don't understand, no, don't attempt to explain, you are quite mistaken," pass if need be from words to blows, and, to a person who knows the imprudent stranger, wax indignant: "What, you know that loathsome creature. He stares at one so! . . . A fine way to behave!" M. de Charlus did not go quite so far as this, but assumed the offended, glacial air adopted, when one appears to be suspecting them, by women who are not of easy virtue, even more by women who are. Furthermore, the invert brought face to face with an invert sees not merely an unpleasing image of himself which, being purely inanimate, could at the worst

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

only injure his self-esteem, but a second self, living, acting in the same sphere, capable therefore of injuring him in his loves. And so it is from an instinct of self-preservation that he will speak evil of the possible rival, whether to people who are able to do him some injury (nor does invert the first mind being thought a liar when he thus denounces invert the second before people who may know all about his own case), or to the young man whom he has "picked up," who is perhaps going to be snatched away from him and whom it is important to persuade that the very things which it is to his advantage to do with the speaker would be the bane of his life if he allowed himself to do them with the other person. To M. de Charlus, who was thinking perhaps of the—wholly imaginary—dangers in which the presence of this Cottard whose smile he misinterpreted might involve Morel, an invert who did not attract him was not merely a caricature of himself, but was a deliberate rival. A tradesman, practising an uncommon trade, who, on his arrival in the provincial town where he intends to settle for life discovers that, in the same square, directly opposite, the same trade is being carried on by a competitor, is no more discomfited than a Charlus who goes down to a quiet spot to make love unobserved and, on the day of his arrival, catches sight of the local squire or the barber, whose aspect and manner leave no room for doubt. The tradesman often comes to regard his competitor with hatred; this hatred degenerates at times into melancholy, and, if there be but a sufficient strain of heredity, one has seen in small towns the tradesman begin to shew signs of insanity which is cured only by his deciding to sell his stock and goodwill and remove to another place. The

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

invert's rage is even more agonising. He has realised that from the first moment the squire and the barber have desired his young companion. Even though he repeat to him a hundred times daily that the barber and the squire are scoundrels whose contact would dishonour him, he is obliged, like Harpagon, to watch over his treasure, and rises in the night to make sure that it is not being stolen. And it is this no doubt that, even more than desire, or the convenience of habits shared in common, and almost as much as that experience of oneself which is the only true experience, makes one invert detect another with a rapidity and certainty that are almost infallible. He may be mistaken for a moment, but a rapid divination brings him back to the truth. And so M. de Charlus's error was brief. His divine discernment shewed him after the first minute that Cottard was not of his kind, and that he need not fear his advances either for himself, which would merely have annoyed him, or for Morel, which would have seemed to him a more serious matter. He recovered his calm, and as he was still beneath the influence of the transit of Venus Androgyne, now and again, he smiled a faint smile at the Verdurins without taking the trouble to open his mouth, merely curving his lips at one corner, and for an instant kindled a coquettish light in his eyes, he so obsessed with virility, exactly as his sister-in-law the Duchesse de Guermantes might have done. "Do you shoot much, Sir?" said M. Verdurin with a note of contempt to M. de Cambremer. "Has Ski told you of the near shave we had to-day?" Cottard inquired of the mistress. "I shoot mostly in the forest of Chantepie," replied M. de Cambremer. "No, I have told her nothing," said Ski. "Does it deserve its

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

name?" Brichot asked M. de Cambremer, after a glance at me from the corner of his eye, for he had promised me that he would introduce the topic of derivations, begging me at the same time not to let the Cambremers know the scorn that he felt for those furnished by the Combray curé. "I am afraid I must be very stupid, but I don't grasp your question," said M. de Cambremer. "I mean to say: do many pies sing in it?" replied Brichot. Cottard meanwhile could not bear Mme. Verdurin's not knowing that they had nearly missed the train. "Out with it," Mme. Cottard said to her husband encouragingly, "tell us your odyssey." "Well, really, it is quite out of the ordinary," said the doctor, and repeated his narrative from the beginning. "When I saw that the train was in the station, I stood thunderstruck. It was all Ski's fault. You are somewhat wide of the mark in your information, my dear fellow! And there was Brichot waiting for us at the station!" "I assumed," said the scholar, casting around him what he could still muster of a glance and smiling with his thin lips, "that if you had been detained at Graincourt, it would mean that you had encountered some peripatetic siren." "Will you hold your tongue, if my wife were to hear you," said the Professor. "This wife of mine, it is jealous." "Ah! That Brichot," cried Ski, moved to traditional merriment by Brichot's spicy witticism, "he is always the same;" albeit he had no reason to suppose that the university don had ever indulged in obscenity. And, to embellish this consecrated utterance with the ritual gesture, he made as though he could not resist the desire to pinch Brichot's leg. "He never changes, the rascal," Ski went on, and without stopping to think of the effect, at once tragic and

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

comic, that the don's semi-blindness gave to his words: "Always a sharp look-out for the ladies." "You see," said M. de Cambremer, "what it is to meet with a scholar. Here have I been shooting for fifteen years in the forest of Chantepie, and I've never even thought of what the name meant." Mme. de Cambremer cast a stern glance at her husband; she did not like him to humble himself thus before Brichot. She was even more annoyed when, at every "ready-made" expression that Cancan employed, Cottard, who knew the ins and outs of them all, having himself laboriously acquired them, pointed out to the Marquis, who admitted his stupidity, that they meant nothing: "Why 'stupid as a cabbage?' Do you suppose cabbages are stupider than anything else? You say: 'repeat the same thing thirty-six times.' Why thirty-six? Why do you say: 'sleep like a top?' Why 'Thunder of Brest?' Why 'play four hundred tricks?'" But at this, the defence of M. de Cambremer was taken up by Brichot who explained the origin of each of these expressions. But Mme. de Cambremer was occupied principally in examining the changes that the Verdurins had introduced at la Raspelière, in order that she might be able to criticise some, and import others, or possibly the same ones, to Féterne. "I keep wondering what that lustre is that's hanging all crooked. I can hardly recognise my old Raspelière," she went on, with a familiarly aristocratic air, as she might have spoken of an old servant meaning not so much to indicate his age as to say that she had seen him in his cradle. And, as she was a trifle bookish in her speech: "All the same," she added in an undertone, "I can't help feeling that if I were inhabiting another person's house, I should feel some com-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

punction about altering everything like this." "It is a pity you didn't come with them," said Mme. Verdurin to M. de Charlus and Morel, hoping that M. de Charlus was now "enrolled" and would submit to the rule that they must all arrive by the same train. "You are sure that Chantepie means the singing magpie, Chochotte?" she went on, to shew that, like the great hostess that she was, she could join in every conversation at the same time. "Tell me something about this violinist," Mme. de Cambremer said to me, "he interests me; I adore music, and it seems to me that I have heard of him before, complete my education." She had heard that Morel had come with M. de Charlus and hoped, by getting the former to come to her house, to make friends with the latter. She added, however, so that I might not guess her reason for asking, "M. Brichot, too, interests me." For, even if she was highly cultivated, just as certain persons inclined to obesity eat hardly anything, and take exercise all day long without ceasing to grow visibly fatter, so Mme. de Cambremer might in vain master, and especially at Féterne, a philosophy that became ever more esoteric, music that became ever more subtle, she emerged from these studies only to weave plots that would enable her to cut the middle-class friends of her girlhood and to form the connexions which she had originally supposed to be part of the social life of her "in laws," and had then discovered to be far more exalted and remote. A philosopher who was not modern enough for her, Leibnitz, has said that the way is long from the intellect to the heart. This way Mme. de Cambremer had been no more capable than her brother of traversing. Abandoning the study of John Stuart Mill only for that of Lachelier, the less she believed

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

in the reality of the external world, the more desperately she sought to establish herself, before she died, in a good position in it. In her passion for realism in art, no object seemed to her humble enough to serve as a model to painter or writer. A fashionable picture or novel would have made her feel sick; Tolstoi's mujiks, or Millet's peasants, were the extreme social boundary beyond which she did not allow the artist to pass. But to cross the boundary that limited her own social relations, to raise herself to an intimate acquaintance with Duchesses, this was the goal of all her efforts, so ineffective had the spiritual treatment to which she subjected herself, by the study of great masterpieces, proved in overcoming the congenital and morbid snobbishness that had developed in her. This snobbishness had even succeeded in curing certain tendencies to avarice and adultery to which in her younger days she had been inclined, just as certain peculiar and permanent pathological conditions seem to render those who are subject to them immune to other maladies. I could not, all the same, refrain, as I listened to her, from giving her credit, without deriving any pleasure from them, for the refinement of her expressions. They were those that are used, at a given date, by all the people of the same intellectual breadth, so that the refined expression provides us at once, like the arc of a circle, with the means to describe and limit the entire circumference. And so the effect of these expressions is that the people who employ them bore me immediately, because I feel that I already know them, but are generally regarded as superior persons, and have often been offered me as delightful and unappreciated companions. "You cannot fail to be aware, Madame, that many forest

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

regions take their name from the animals that inhabit them. Next to the forest of Chantepie, you have the wood Chanteraine." "I don't know who the queen may be, but you are not very polite to her," said M. de Cambremer. "One for you, Chochotte," said Mme. de Verdurin. "And apart from that, did you have a pleasant journey?" "We encountered only vague human beings who thronged the train. But I must answer M. de Cambremer's question; *reine*, in this instance, is not the wife of a king, but a frog. It is the name that the frog has long retained in this district, as is shewn by the station, Renneville, which ought to be spelt Reineville." "I say, that seems a fine animal," said M. de Cambremer to Mme. Verdurin, pointing to a fish. (It was one of the compliments by means of which he considered that he paid his scot at a dinner-party, and gave an immediate return of hospitality. "There is no need to invite them," he would often say, in speaking of one or other couple of their friends to his wife. "They were delighted to have us. It was they that thanked me for coming.") I must tell you, all the same, that I have been going every day for years to Renneville, and I have never seen any more frogs there than anywhere else. Madame de Cambremer brought the curé here from a parish where she owns a considerable property, who has very much the same turn of mind as yourself, it seems to me. He has written a book." "I know, I have read it with immense interest," Brichot replied hypocritically. The satisfaction that his pride received indirectly from this answer made M. de Cambremer laugh long and loud. "Ah! well, the author of, what shall I say, this geography, this glossary, dwells at great length upon the name of a little

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

place of which we were formerly, if I may say so, the Lords, and which is called Pont-à-Coulevre. Of course I am only an ignorant rustic compared with such a fountain of learning, but I have been to Pont-à-Coulevre a thousand times if he's been there once, and devil take me if I ever saw one of his beastly serpents there, I say beastly, in spite of the tribute the worthy La Fontaine pays them." (*The Man and the Serpent* was one of his two fables.) "You have not seen any, and you have been quite right," replied Brichot. "Undoubtedly, the writer you mention knows his subject through and through, he has written a remarkable book." "There!" exclaimed Mme. de Cambremer, "that book, there's no other word for it, is a regular Benedictine *opus*." "No doubt he has consulted various polyptychs (by which we mean the lists of benefices and cures of each diocese), which may have furnished him with the names of lay patrons and ecclesiastical collators. But there are other sources. One of the most learned of my friends has delved into them. He found that the place in question was named Pont-à-Quileuvre. This odd name encouraged him to carry his researches farther, to a Latin text in which the bridge that your friend supposes to be infested with serpents is styled *Pons cui aperit*: A closed bridge that was opened only upon due payment." "You were speaking of frogs. I, when I find myself among such learned folk, feel like the frog before the areopagus," (this being his other fable), said Cancan who often indulged, with a hearty laugh, in this pleasantry thanks to which he imagined himself to be making, at one and the same time, out of humility and with aptness, a profession of ignorance and a display of learning. As for Cottard,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

blocked upon one side by M. de Charlus's silence, and driven to seek an outlet elsewhere, he turned to me with one of those questions which so impressed his patients when it hit the mark and shewed them that he could put himself so to speak inside their bodies; if on the other hand it missed the mark, it enabled him to check certain theories, to widen his previous point of view. "When you come to a relatively high altitude, such as this where we now are, do you find that the change increases your tendency to choking fits?" he asked me with the certainty of either arousing admiration or enlarging his own knowledge. M. de Cambremer heard the question and smiled. "I can't tell you how amused I am to hear that you have choking fits," he flung at me across the table. He did not mean that it made him happy, though as a matter of fact it did. For this worthy man could not hear any reference to another person's sufferings without a feeling of satisfaction and a spasm of hilarity which speedily gave place to the instinctive pity of a kind heart. But his words had another meaning which was indicated more precisely by the clause that followed: "It amuses me," he explained, "because my sister has them too." And indeed it did amuse him, as it would have amused him to hear me mention as one of my friends a person who was constantly coming to their house. "How small the world is," was the reflexion which he formed mentally and which I saw written upon his smiling face when Cottard spoke to me of my choking fits. And these began to establish themselves, from the evening of this dinner-party, as a sort of interest in common, after which M. de Cambremer never failed to inquire, if only to hand on a report to his sister. As I answered the questions with

which his wife kept plying me about Morel, my thoughts returned to a conversation I had had with my mother that afternoon. Having, without any attempt to dissuade me from going to the Verdurins' if there was a chance of my being amused there, suggested that it was a house of which my grandfather would not have approved, which would have made him exclaim: "On guard!" my mother had gone on to say: "Listen, Judge Toureuil and his wife told me they had been to luncheon with Mme. Bon-temps. They asked me no questions. But I seemed to gather from what was said that your marriage to Albertine would be the joy of her aunt's life. I think the real reason is that they are all extremely fond of you. At the same time the style in which they suppose that you would be able to keep her, the sort of friends they more or less know that we have, all that is not, I fancy, left out of account, although it may be a minor consideration. I should not have mentioned it to you myself, because I attach no importance to it, but as I imagine that people will mention it to you, I prefer to get a word in first." "But you yourself, what do you think of her?" I asked my mother. "Well, it's not I that am going to marry her. You might certainly do a thousand times better. But I feel that your grandmother would not have liked me to influence you. As a matter of fact, I cannot tell you what I think of Albertine; I don't think of her. I shall say to you, like Madame de Sévigné: 'She has good qualities, at least I suppose so. But at this first stage I can praise her only by negatives. One thing she is not, she has not the Rennes accent. In time, I shall perhaps say, she is something else. And I shall always think well of her if she can make you happy.'" But by these

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

very words which left it to myself to decide my own happiness, my mother had plunged me in that state of doubt in which I had been plunged long ago when, my father having allowed me to go to *Phèdre* and, what was more, to take to writing, I had suddenly felt myself burdened with too great a responsibility, the fear of distressing him, and that melancholy which we feel when we cease to obey orders which, from one day to another, keep the future hidden, and realise that we have at last begun to live in real earnest, as a grown-up person, the life, the only life that any of us has at his disposal.

Perhaps the best thing would be to wait a little longer, to begin by regarding Albertine as in the past, so as to find out whether I really loved her. I might take her, as a distraction, to see the Verdurins, and this thought reminded me that I had come there myself that evening only to learn whether Mme. Putbus was staying there or was expected. In any case, she was not dining with them. "Speaking of your friend Saint-Loup," said Mme. de Cambremer, using an expression which shewed a closer sequence in her ideas than her remarks might have led one to suppose, for if she spoke to me about music she was thinking about the Guermantes; "you know that everybody is talking about his marriage to the niece of the Princesse de Guermantes. I may tell you that, so far as I am concerned, all that society gossip leaves me cold." I was seized by a fear that I might have spoken unfeelingly to Robert about the girl in question, a girl full of sham originality, whose mind was as mediocre as her actions were violent. Hardly ever do we hear anything that does not make us regret something that we have said. I replied to Mme. de Cambremer, truthfully

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

as it happened, that I knew nothing about it, and that anyhow I thought that the girl was still too young to be engaged. "That is perhaps why it is not yet official, anyhow there is a lot of talk about it." "I ought to warn you," Mme. Verdurin observed dryly to Mme. de Cambremer, having heard her talking to me about Morel and supposing, when Mme. de Cambremer lowered her voice to speak of Saint-Loup's engagement, that Morel was still under discussion. "You needn't expect any light music here. In matters of art, you know, the faithful who come to my Wednesdays, my children as I call them, are all fearfully advanced," she added with an air of proud terror. "I say to them sometimes: My dear people, you move too fast for your Mistress, not that she has ever been said to be afraid of anything daring. Every year it goes a little farther; I can see the day coming when they will have no more use for Wagner or Indy." "But it is splendid to be advanced, one can never be advanced enough," said Mme. de Cambremer, scrutinising as she spoke every corner of the dining-room, trying to identify the things that her mother-in-law had left there, those that Mme. Verdurin had brought with her, and to convict the latter red-handed of want of taste. At the same time, she tried to get me to talk of the subject that interested her most, M. de Charlus. She thought it touching that he should be looking after a violinist. "He seems intelligent." "Why, his mind is extremely active for a man of his age," said I. "Age? But he doesn't seem at all old, look, the hair is still young." (For, during the last three or four years, the word hair had been used with the article by one of those unknown persons who launch the literary fashions, and everybody at the same

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

radius from the centre as Mme. de Cambremer would say "the hair," not without an affected smile. At the present day, people still say "the hair" but, from an excessive use of the article, the pronoun will be born again.) "What interests me most about M. de Charlus," she went on, "is that one can feel that he has the gift. I may tell you that I attach little importance to knowledge. Things that can be learned do not interest me." This speech was not incompatible with Mme. de Cambremer's own distinction which was, in the fullest sense, imitated and acquired. But it so happened that one of the things which one had to know at that moment was that knowledge is nothing, and is not worth a straw when compared with originality. Mme. de Cambremer had learned, with everything else, that one ought not to learn anything. "That is why," she explained to me, "Brichot, who has an interesting side to him, for I am not one to despise a certain spicy erudition, interests me far less." But Brichot, at that moment, was occupied with one thing only; hearing people talk about music, he trembled lest the subject should remind Mme. Verdurin of the death of Dechambre. He decided to say something that would avert that harrowing memory. M. de Cambremer provided him with an opportunity with the question: "You mean to say that wooded places always take their names from animals?" "Not at all," replied Brichot, proud to display his learning before so many strangers, among whom, I had told him, he would be certain to interest one at least. "We have only to consider how often, even in the names of people, a tree is preserved, like a fern in a piece of coal. One of our Conscript Fathers is called M. de Saulces de Freycinet, which means, if I be not mis-

taken, a spot planted with willows and ashes, *salix et fraxinetum*; his nephew M. de Selve scombines more trees still, since he is named de Selves, *de sylvis*." Saniette was delighted to see the conversation take so animated a turn. He could, since Brichot was talking all the time, preserve a silence which would save him from being the butt of M. and Mme. Verdurin's wit. And growing even more sensitive in his joy at being set free, he had been touched when he heard M. Verdurin, notwithstanding the formality of so grand a dinner-party, tell the butler to put a decanter of water in front of M. Saniette who never drank anything else. (The generals responsible for the death of most soldiers insist upon their being well fed.) Moreover, Mme. Verdurin had actually smiled once at Saniette. Decidedly, they were kind people. He was not going to be tortured any more. At this moment the meal was interrupted by one of the party whom I have forgotten to mention, an eminent Norwegian philosopher who spoke French very well but very slowly, for the twofold reason that, in the first place, having learned the language only recently and not wishing to make mistakes (he did, nevertheless, make some), he referred each word to a sort of mental dictionary, and secondly, being a metaphysician, he always thought of what he intended to say while he was saying it, which, even in a Frenchman, causes slowness of utterance. He was, otherwise, a charming person, although similar in appearance to many other people, save in one respect. This man so slow in his diction (there was an interval of silence after every word) acquired a startling rapidity in escaping from the room as soon as he had said good-bye. His haste made

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

one suppose, the first time one saw him, that he was suffering from colic or some even more urgent need.

"My dear—colleague," he said to Brichot, after deliberating in his mind whether colleague was the correct term, "I have a sort of—desire to know whether there are other trees in the—nomenclature of your beautiful French—Latin—Norman tongue. Madame" (he meant Madame Verdurin, although he dared not look at her) "has told me that you know everything. Is not this precisely the moment?" "No, it is the moment for eating," interrupted Mme. Verdurin, who saw the dinner becoming interminable. "Very well," the Scandinavian replied, bowing his head over his plate with a resigned and sorrowful smile. "But I must point out to Madame that if I have permitted myself this questionnaire—pardon me, this question—it is because I have to return to-morrow to Paris to dine at the Tour d'Argent or at the Hôtel Meurice. My French—brother—M. Boutroux is to address us there about certain seances of spiritualism—pardon me, certain spirituous evocations which he has controlled." "The Tour d'Argent is not nearly as good as they make out," said Mme. Verdurin sourly. "In fact, I have had some disgusting dinners there." "But am I mistaken, is not the food that one consumes at Madame's table an example of the finest French cookery?" "Well, it is not positively bad," replied Mme. Verdurin, sweetening. "And if you come next Wednesday, it will be better." "But I am leaving on Monday for Algiers, and from there I am going to the Cape. And when I am at the Cape of Good Hope, I shall no longer be able to meet my illustrious colleague—pardon me, I shall no longer be able to meet my brother." And he set to work obedi-

ently, after offering these retrospective apologies, to devour his food at a headlong pace. But Brichot was only too delighted to be able to furnish other vegetable etymologies, and replied, so greatly interesting the Norwegian that he again stopped eating, but with a sign to the servants that they might remove his plate and help him to the next course. "One of the Forty," said Brichot, "is named Houssaye, or a place planted with hollies; in the name of a brilliant diplomat, d'Ormesson, you will find the elm, the *ulmus* beloved of Virgil, which has given its name to the town of Ulm; in the names of his colleagues, M. de la Boulaye, the birch (*bouleau*); M. d'Aunay, the alder (*aune*), M. de Buissière, the box (*buis*), M. Albarret, the sapwood (*aubier*)," (I made a mental note that I must tell this to Céleste) "M. de Cholet, the cabbage (*chou*), and the apple-tree (*pommier*) in the name of M. de la Pommeraye, whose lectures we used to attend, do you remember, Saniette, in the days when the worthy Porel had been sent to the farthest ends of the earth, as Proconsul in Odeonia?" "You said that Cholet was derived from *chou*," I remarked to Brichot. "Am I to suppose that the name of a station I passed before reaching Doncières, Saint-Frichoux, comes from *chou* also?" "No, Saint-Frichoux is *Sanctus Fructuosus*, as *Sanctus Ferreolus* gave rise to Saint-Fargeau, but that is not Norman in the least." "He knows too much, he's boring us," the Princess muttered softly. "There are so many other names that interest me, but I can't ask you everything at once." And, turning to Cottard, "Is Madame Putbus here?" I asked him. On hearing Brichot utter the name of Saniette, M. Verdurin cast at his wife and at Cottard an ironical glance which confounded their timid

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

guest. "No, thank heaven," replied Mme. Verdurin, who had overheard my question, "I have managed to turn her thoughts in the direction of Venice, we are rid of her for this year." "I shall myself be entitled presently to two trees," said M. de Charlus, "for I have more or less taken a little house between Saint-Martin-du-Chêne and Saint-Pierre-des-Ifs." "But that is quite close to here, I hope that you will come over often with Charlie Morel. You have only to come to an arrangement with our little group about the trains, you are only a step from Doncières," said Mme. Verdurin, who hated people's not coming by the same train and not arriving at the hours when she sent carriages to meet them. She knew how stiff the climb was to la Raspelière, even if you took the zigzag path, behind Féterne, which was half-an-hour longer; she was afraid that those of her guests who kept to themselves might not find carriages to take them, or even, having in reality stayed away, might plead the excuse that they had not found a carriage at Douville-Féterne, and had not felt strong enough to make so stiff a climb on foot. To this invitation M. de Charlus responded with a silent bow. "He's not the sort of person you can talk to any day of the week, he seems a tough customer," the doctor whispered to Ski, for having remained quite simple, notwithstanding a surface-dressing of pride, he made no attempt to conceal the fact that Charlus had snubbed him. "He is doubtless unaware that at all the watering-places, and even in Paris in the wards, the physicians, who naturally regard me as their 'chief,' make it a point of honour to introduce me to all the noblemen present, not that they need to be asked twice. It makes my stay at the spas quite enjoy-

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

able," he added carelessly. "Indeed at Doncières the medical officer of the regiment, who is the doctor who attends the Colonel, invited me to luncheon to meet him, saying that I was fully entitled to dine with the General. And that General is a Monsieur *de* something. I don't know whether his title-deeds are more or less ancient than those of this Baron." "Don't you worry about him, his is a very humble coronet," replied Ski in an undertone, and added some vague statement including a word of which I caught only the last syllable, *-ast*, being engaged in listening to what Brichot was saying to M. de Charlus. "No, as for that, I am sorry to say, you have probably one tree only, for if Saint-Martin-du-Chêne is obviously *Sanctus Martinus juxta quercum*, on the other hand, the word *if* may be simply the root *ave*, *eve*, which means moist, as in Aveyron, Lodève, Yvette, and which you see survive in our kitchen-sinks (*évier*s). It is the word *eau* which in Breton is represented by *ster*, Stermaria, Sterlaer, Sterbouest, Ster-en-Dreuchen." I heard no more, for whatever the pleasure I might feel on hearing again the name Stermaria, I could not help listening to Cottard, next to whom I was seated, as he murmured to Ski: "Indeed! I was not aware of it. So he is a gentleman who has learned to look behind! He is one of the happy band, is he? He hasn't got rings of fat round his eyes, all the same. I shall have to keep my feet well under me, or he may start squeezing them. But I'm not at all surprised. I am used to seeing noblemen in the bath, in their birthday suits, they are all more or less degenerates. I don't talk to them, because after all I am in an official position and it might do me harm. But they know quite well who I am." Saniette, whom Brichot's appeal had

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

frightened, was beginning to breathe again, like a man who is afraid of the storm when he finds that the lightning has not been followed by any sound of thunder, when he heard M. Verdurin interrogate him, fastening upon him a stare which did not spare the wretch until he had finished speaking, so as to put him at once out of countenance and prevent him from recovering his composure. "But you never told us that you went to those *matinées* at the Odéon, Saniette?" Trembling like a recruit before a bullying serjeant, Saniette replied, making his speech as diminutive as possible, so that it might have a better chance of escaping the blow: "Only once, to the *Chercheuse*." "What's that he says?" shouted M. Verdurin, with an air of disgust and fury combined, knitting his brows as though it was all he could do to grasp something unintelligible. "It is impossible to understand what you say, what have you got in your mouth?" inquired M. Verdurin, growing more and more furious, and alluding to Saniette's defective speech. "Poor Saniette, I won't have him made unhappy," said Mme. Verdurin in a tone of false pity, so as to leave no one in doubt as to her husband's insolent intention. "I was at the Ch... Che..." "Che, che, try to speak distinctly," said M. Verdurin, "I can't understand a word you say." Almost without exception, the faithful burst out laughing and they suggested a band of cannibals in whom the sight of a wound on a white man's skin has aroused the thirst for blood. For the instinct of imitation and absence of courage govern society and the mob alike. And we all of us laugh at a person whom we see being made fun of, which does not prevent us from venerating him ten years later in a circle where he is admired. It is in like man-

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

ner that the populace banishes or acclaims its kings. "Come, now, it is not his fault," said Mme. Verdurin. "It is not mine either, people ought not to dine out if they can't speak properly." "I was at the *Chercheuse d'Esprit* by Favart." "What! It's the *Chercheuse d'Esprit* that you call the *Chercheuse*? Why, that's marvellous! I might have tried for a hundred years without guessing it," cried M. Verdurin, who all the same would have decided immediately that you were not literary, were not artistic, were not "one of us," if he had heard you quote the full title of certain works. For instance, one was expected to say the *Malade*, the *Bourgeois*; and whoso would have added *imaginaire* or *gentil-homme* would have shewn that he did not understand "shop," just as in a drawing-room a person proves that he is not in society by saying "M. de Montesquiou-Fézensac" instead of "M. de Montesquiou." "But it is not so extraordinary," said Saniette, breathless with emotion but smiling, albeit he was in no smiling mood. Mme. Verdurin could not contain herself: "Yes, indeed!" she cried with a titter. "You may be quite sure that nobody would ever have guessed that you meant the *Chercheuse d'Esprit*." M. Verdurin went on in a gentler tone, addressing both Saniette and Brichot: "It is quite a pretty piece, all the same, the *Chercheuse d'Esprit*." Uttered in a serious tone, this simple phrase, in which one could detect no trace of malice, did Saniette as much good and aroused in him as much gratitude as a deliberate compliment. He was unable to utter a single word and preserved a happy silence. Brichot was more loquacious. "It is true," he replied to M. Verdurin, "and if it could be passed off as the work of some Sarmatian or Scandina-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

vian author, we might put forward the *Chercheuse d'Esprit* as a candidate for the vacant post of masterpiece. But, be it said without any disrespect to the shade of the gentle Favart, he had not the Ibsenian temperament." (Immediately he blushed to the roots of his hair, remembering the Norwegian philosopher who appeared troubled because he was seeking in vain to discover what vegetable the *buis* might be that Brichot had cited a little earlier in connexion with the name Bussière.) "However, now that Porel's satrapy is filled by a functionary who is a Tolstoist of rigorous observance, it may come to pass that we shall witness *Anna Karenina* or *Resurrection* beneath the Odeonian architrave." "I know the portrait of Favart to which you allude," said M. de Charlus. "I have seen a very fine print of it at Comtesse Molé's." The name of Comtesse Molé made a great impression upon Mme. Verdurin. "Oh! So you go to Mme. de Molé's!" she exclaimed. She supposed that people said Comtesse Molé, Madame Molé, simply as an abbreviation, as she heard people say "the Rohans" or in contempt, as she herself said: "Madame la Trémoille." She had no doubt that Comtesse Molé, who knew the Queen of Greece and the Principessa di Caprara, had as much right as anybody to the particle, and for once in a way had decided to bestow it upon so brilliant a personage, and one who had been extremely civil to herself. And so, to make it clear that she had spoken thus on purpose and did not grudge the Comtesse her "de," she went on: "But I had no idea that you knew Madame de Molé!" as though it had been doubly extraordinary, both that M. de Charlus should know the lady, and that Mme. Verdurin should not know that he knew

her. Now society, or at least the people to whom M. de Charlus gave that name, forms a relatively homogeneous and compact whole. And so it is comprehensible that, in the incongruous vastness of the middle classes, a barrister may say to somebody who knows one of his school friends: "But how in the world do you come to know him?" whereas to be surprised at a Frenchman's knowing the meaning of the word *temple* or *forest* would be hardly more extraordinary than to wonder at the hazards that might have brought together M. de Charlus and the Comtesse Molé. What is more, even if such an acquaintance had not been derived quite naturally from the laws that govern society, how could there be anything strange in the fact of Mme. Verdurin's not knowing of it, since she was meeting M. de Charlus for the first time, and his relations with Mme. Molé were far from being the only thing that she did not know with regard to him, about whom, to tell the truth, she knew nothing. "Who was it that played this *Chercheuse d'esprit*, my good Saniette?" asked M. Verdurin. Albeit he felt that the storm had passed, the old antiquarian hesitated before answering. "There you go," said Mme. Verdurin, "you frighten him, you make fun of everything that he says, and then you expect him to answer. Come along, tell us who played the part, and you shall have some galantine to take home," said Mme. Verdurin, making a cruel allusion to the penury into which Saniette had plunged himself by trying to rescue the family of a friend. "I can remember only that it was Mme. Samary who played the Zerbine," said Saniette. "The Zerbine? What in the world is that," M. Verdurin shouted, as though the house were on fire. "It is one of the parts in the old repertory, like

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Captain Fracasse, as who should say the Fire-eater, the Pedant." "Ah, the pedant, that's yourself. The Zerbine! No, really the man's mad," exclaimed M. Verdurin. Mme. Verdurin looked at her guests and laughed as though to apologise for Saniette. "The Zerbine, he imagines that everybody will know at once what it means. You are like M. de Longepierre, the stupidest man I know, who said to us quite calmly the other day 'the Banat.' Nobody had any idea what he meant. Finally we were informed that it was a province in Serbia." To put an end to Saniette's torture, which hurt me more than it hurt him, I asked Brichot if he knew what the word Balbec meant. "Balbec is probably a corruption of Dalbec," he told me. "One would have to consult the charters of the Kings of England, Overlords of Normandy, for Balbec was held of the Barony of Dover, for which reason it was often styled Balbec d'Outre-Mer, Balbec-en-Terre. But the Barony of Dover was itself held of the Bishopric of Bayeux, and, notwithstanding the rights that were temporarily enjoyed in the abbey by the Templars, from the time of Louis d'Harcourt, Patriarch of Jerusalem and Bishop of Bayeux, it was the Bishops of that diocese who collated to the benefice of Balbec. So it was explained to me by the incumbent of Douville, a bald person, eloquent, fantastic, and a devotee of the table, who lives by the Rule of Brillat-Savarin, and who expounded to me in slightly sibylline language a loose pedagogy, while he fed me upon some admirable fried potatoes." While Brichot smiled to shew how witty it was to combine matters so dissimilar and to employ an ironically lofty diction in treating of commonplace things, Saniette was trying to find a loophole for some clever re-

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

mark which would raise him from the abyss into which he had fallen. The witty remark was what was known as a "comparison," but had changed its form, for there is an evolution in wit as in literary styles, an epidemic that disappears has its place taken by another, and so forth. . . . At one time the typical "comparison" was the "height of. . . ." But this was out of date, no one used it any more, there was only Cottard left to say still, on occasion, in the middle of a game of piquet: "Do you know what is the height of absent-mindedness, it is to think that the Edict (*l'édit*) of Nantes was an English-woman." These "heights" had been replaced by nicknames. In reality it was still the old "comparison," but, as the nickname was in fashion, people did not observe the survival. Unfortunately for Saniette, when these "comparisons" were not his own, and as a rule were unknown to the little nucleus, he produced them so timidly that, notwithstanding the laugh with which he followed them up to indicate their humorous nature, nobody saw the point. And if on the other hand the joke was his own, as he had generally hit upon it in conversation with one of the faithful, and the latter had repeated it, appropriating the authorship, the joke was in that case known, but not as being Saniette's. And so when he slipped in one of these it was recognised, but, because he was its author, he was accused of plagiarism. "Very well, then," Bricot continued, "Bec, in Norman, is a stream; there is the Abbey of Bec, Mobec, the stream from the march (Mor or Mer meant a marsh, as in Morville, or in Bricquemar, Alvimare, Cambremer), Bricquebec the stream from the high ground coming from Briga, a fortified place, as in Bricqueville, Bricquebose, le Bric, Briand,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

or indeed Brice, bridge, which is the same as *bruck* in German (Innsbruck), and as the English *bridge* which ends so many place-names (Cambridge, for instance). You have moreover in Normandy many other instances of bec: Caudebec. Bolbec, le Robec, le Bec-Hellouin, Becquerel. It is the Norman form of the German *bach*, Offenbach, Anspach. Varaguebec, from the old word *varaigne*, equivalent to *warren*, preserved woods or ponds. As for Dal," Brichot went on, "it is a form of *thal*, a valley: Darnetal, Rosendal, and indeed, close to Louviers, Becdal. The river that has given its name to Balbec, is, by the way, charming. Seen from a *falaise* (*fels* in German, you have indeed, not far from here, standing on a height, the picturesque town of Falaise), it runs close under the spires of the church, which is actually a long way from it, and seems to be reflecting them." "I should think so," said I, "that is an effect that Elstir admires greatly. I have seen several sketches of it in his studio." "Elstir! You know Tiche," cried Mme. Verdurin. "But do you know that we used to be the dearest friends. Thank heaven, I never see him now. No, but ask Cottard, Brichot, he used to have his place laid at my table, he came every day. Now, there's a man of whom you can say that it has done him no good to leave our little nucleus. I shall shew you presently some flowers he painted for me; you shall see the difference from the things he is doing now, which I don't care for at all, not at all! Why! I made him do me a portrait of Cottard, not to mention all the sketches he has made of me." "And he gave the Professor purple hair," said Mme. Cottard, forgetting that at the time her husband had not been even a Fellow of the College. "I don't

know, Sir, whether you find that my husband has purple hair." "That doesn't matter," said Mme. Verdurin, raising her chin with an air of contempt for Mme. Cottard and of admiration for the man of whom she was speaking, "he was a brave colourist, a fine painter. Whereas," she added, turning again to myself, "I don't know whether you call it painting, all those huge she-devils of composition, those vast structures he exhibits now that he has given up coming to me. For my part, I call it daubing, it's all so hackneyed, and besides, it lacks relief, personality. It's anybody's work." "He revives the grace of the eighteenth century, but in a modern form," Saniette broke out, fortified and reassured by my affability. "But I prefer Helleu." "He's not in the least like Helleu," said Mme. Verdurin. "Yes, he has the fever of the eighteenth century. He's a steam Watteau," and he began to laugh. "Old, old as the hills, I've had that served up to me for years," said M. Verdurin, to whom indeed Ski had once repeated the remark, but as his own invention. "It's unfortunate that when once in a way you say something quite amusing and make it intelligible, it is not your own." "I'm sorry about it," Mme. Verdurin went on, "because he was really gifted, he has wasted a charming temperament for painting. Ah! if he had stayed with us! Why, he would have become the greatest landscape painter of our day. And it is a woman that has dragged him down so low! Not that that surprises me, for he was a pleasant enough man, but common. At bottom, he was a mediocrity. I may tell you that I felt it at once. Really, he never interested me. I was very fond of him, that was all. For one thing, he was so dirty. Tell me, do you, now, really like

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

people who never wash?" "What is this charmingly coloured thing that we are eating?" asked Ski. "It is called strawberry mousse," said Mme. Verdurin. "But it is *ex-qui-site*. You ought to open bottles of Château-Margaux, Château-Lafite, port wine." "I can't tell you how he amuses me, he never drinks anything but water," said Mme. Verdurin, seeking to cloak with her delight at such a flight of fancy her alarm at the thought of so prodigal an outlay. "But not to drink," Ski went on, "you shall fill all our glasses, they will bring in marvellous peaches, huge nectarines, there against the sunset; it will be as gorgeous as a fine Veronese." "It would cost almost as much," M. Verdurin murmured. "But take away those cheeses with their hideous colour," said Ski, trying to snatch the plate from before his host, who defended his gruyère with his might and main. "You can realise that I don't regret Elstir," Mme. Verdurin said to me, "that one is far more gifted. Elstir is simply hard work, the man who can't make himself give up painting when he would like to. He is the good student, the slavish competitor. Ski, now, only follows his own fancy. You will see him light a cigarette in the middle of dinner." "After all, I can't see why you wouldn't invite his wife," said Cottard, "he would be with us still." "Will you mind what you're saying, please, I don't open my doors to street-walkers, Monsieur le Professeur," said Mme. Verdurin, who had, on the contrary, done everything in her power to make Elstir return, even with his wife. But before they were married she had tried to make them quarrel, had told Elstir that the woman he loved was stupid, dirty, immoral, a thief. For once in a way she had failed to effect a breach. It was with the Verdurin

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

salon that Elstir had broken; and he was glad of it, as converts bless the illness or misfortune that has withdrawn them from the world and has made them learn the way of salvation. "He really is magnificent, the Professor," she said. "Why not declare outright that I keep a disorderly house. Anyone would think you didn't know what Madame Elstir was like. I would sooner have the lowest street-walker at my table! Oh no, I don't stand for that sort of thing. Besides I may tell you that it would have been stupid of me to overlook the wife, when the husband no longer interests me, he is out of date, he can't even draw." "That is extraordinary in a man of his intelligence," said Cottard. "Oh, no!" replied Mme. Verdurin, "even at the time when he had talent, for he had it, the wretch, and to spare, what was tiresome about him was that he had not a spark of intelligence." Mme. Verdurin, in passing this judgment upon Elstir, had not waited for their quarrel, or until she had ceased to care for his painting. The fact was that, even at the time when he formed part of the little group, it would happen that Elstir spent the whole day in the company of some woman whom, rightly or wrongly, Mme. Verdurin considered a goose, which, in her opinion, was not the conduct of an intelligent man. "No," she observed with an air of finality, "I consider that his wife and he are made for one another. Heaven knows, there isn't a more boring creature on the face of the earth, and I should go mad if I had to spend a couple of hours with her. But people say that he finds her very intelligent. There's no use denying it, our Tiche was *extremely stupid*. I have seen him bowled over by people you can't conceive, worthy idiots we should never have allowed into our little

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

clan. Well! He wrote to them, he argued with them, he, Elstir! That doesn't prevent his having charming qualities, oh, charming and deliciously absurd, naturally." For Mme. Verdurin was convinced that men who are truly remarkable are capable of all sorts of follies. A false idea in which there is nevertheless a grain of truth. Certainly, people's follies are insupportable. But a want of balance which we discover only in course of time is the consequence of the entering into a human brain of delicacies for which it is not regularly adapted. So that the oddities of charming people exasperate us, but there are few if any charming people who are not, at the same time, odd. "Look, I shall be able to shew you his flowers now," she said to me, seeing that her husband was making signals to her to rise. And she took M. de Cambremer's arm again. M. Verdurin tried to apologise for this to M. de Charlus, as soon as he had got rid of Mme. de Cambremer, and to give him his reasons, chiefly for the pleasure of discussing these social refinements with a gentleman of title, momentarily the inferior of those who assigned to him the place to which they considered him entitled. But first of all he was anxious to make it clear to M. de Charlus that intellectually he esteemed him too highly to suppose that he could pay any attention to these trivialities. "Excuse my mentioning so small a point," he began, "for I can understand how little such things mean to you. Middle-class minds pay attention to them, but the others, the artists, the people who are really of our sort, don't give a rap for them. Now, from the first words we exchanged, I realised that you were one of us!" M. de Charlus, who gave a widely different meaning to this expression, drew himself erect. After the doctor's

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

oglings, he found his host's insulting frankness suffocating. "Don't protest, my dear Sir, you are one of us, it is plain as daylight," replied M. Verdurin. "Observe that I have no idea whether you practise any of the arts, but that is not necessary. It is not always sufficient. Dechambre, who has just died, played exquisitely, with the most vigorous execution, but he was not one of us, you felt at once that he was not one of us. Brichot is not one of us. Morel is, my wife is, I can feel that you are. . . ." "What were you going to tell me?" interrupted M. de Charlus, who was beginning to feel reassured as to M. Verdurin's meaning, but preferred that he should not utter these misleading remarks quite so loud. "Only that we put you on the left," replied M. Verdurin. M. de Charlus, with a comprehending, genial, insolent smile, replied: "Why! That is not of the slightest importance, *here!*" And he gave a little laugh that was all his own—a laugh that came to him probably from some Bavarian or Lorraine grandmother, who herself had inherited it, in identical form, from an ancestress, so that it had been sounding now, without change, for not a few centuries in little old-fashioned European courts, and one could relish its precious quality like that of certain old musical instruments that have now grown rare. There are times when, to paint a complete portrait of some one, we should have to add a phonetic imitation to our verbal description, and our portrait of the figure that M. de Charlus presented is liable to remain incomplete in the absence of that little laugh, so delicate, so light, just as certain compositions are never accurately rendered because our orchestras lack those "small trumpets," with a sound so entirely their own, for which the composer wrote

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

this or that part. "But," M. Verdurin explained, stung by his laugh, "we did it on purpose. I attach no importance whatever to title of nobility," he went on, with that contemptuous smile which I have seen so many people whom I have known, unlike my grandmother and my mother, assume when they spoke of anything that they did not possess, before others who thus, they supposed, would be prevented from using that particular advantage to crow over them. "But, don't you see, since we happened to have M. de Cambremer here, and he is a Marquis, while you are only a Baron. . . ." "Pardon me," M. de Charlus replied with an arrogant air to the astonished Verdurin, "I am also Duc de Brabant, Damoiseau de Montargis, Prince d'Oléron, de Carency, de Viareggio and des Dunes. However, it is not of the slightest importance. Please do not distress yourself," he concluded, resuming his subtle smile which spread itself over these final words: "I could see at a glance that you were not accustomed to society."

Mme. Verdurin came across to me to shew me Elstir's flowers. If this action, to which I had grown so indifferent, of going out to dinner, had on the contrary, taking the form that made it entirely novel, of a journey along the coast, followed by an ascent in a carriage to a point six hundred feet above the sea, produced in me a sort of intoxication, this feeling had not been dispelled at la Raspelière. "Just look at this, now," said the Mistress, shewing me some huge and splendid roses by Elstir, whose unctuous scarlet and rich white stood out, however, with almost too creamy a relief from the flower-stand upon which they were arranged. "Do you suppose he would still have the touch to get that? Don't you call

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

that striking? And besides, it's fine as matter, it would be amusing to handle. I can't tell you how amusing it was to watch him painting them. One could feel that he was interested in trying to get just that effect." And the Mistress's gaze rested musingly on this present from the artist in which were combined not merely his great talent but their long friendship which survived only in these mementoes of it which he had bequeathed to her; behind the flowers which long ago he had picked for her, she seemed to see the shapely hand that had painted them, in the course of a morning, in their freshness, so that, they on the table, it leaning against the back of a chair had been able to meet face to face at the Mistress's luncheon party, the roses still alive and their almost lifelike portrait. Almost only, for Elstir was unable to look at a flower without first transplanting it to that inner garden in which we are obliged always to remain. He had shewn in this water-colour the appearance of the roses which he had seen, and which, but for him, no one would ever have known; so that one might say that they were a new variety with which this painter, like a skilful gardener, had enriched the family of the Roses. "From the day he left the little nucleus, he was finished. It seems, my dinners made him waste his time, that I hindered the development of his *genius*," she said in a tone of irony. "As if the society of a woman like myself could fail to be beneficial to an artist," she exclaimed with a burst of pride. Close beside us, M. de Cambremer, who was already seated, seeing that M. de Charlus was standing, made as though to rise and offer him his chair. This offer may have arisen, in the Marquis's mind, from nothing more than a vague wish to be polite. M. de Charlus preferred

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

to attach to it the sense of a duty which the plain gentleman knew that he owed to a Prince, and felt that he could not establish his right to this precedence better than by declining it. And so he exclaimed: "What are you doing? I beg of you! The idea!" The astutely vehement tone of this protest had in itself something typically "Guermantes" which became even more evident in the imperative, superfluous and familiar gesture with which he brought both his hands down, as though to force him to remain seated, upon the shoulders of M. de Cambremer who had not risen: "Come, come, my dear fellow," the Baron insisted, "this is too much. There is no reason for it! In these days we keep that for Princes of the Blood." I made no more effect on the Cambremers than on Mme. Verdurin by my enthusiasm for their house. For I remained cold to the beauties which they pointed out to me and grew excited over confused reminiscences; at times I even confessed my disappointment at not finding something correspond to what its name had made me imagine. I enraged Mme. de Cambremer by telling her that I had supposed the place to be more in the country. On the other hand I broke off in an ecstasy to sniff the fragrance of a breeze that crept in through the chink of the door. "I see you like draughts," they said to me. My praise of the patch of green lining-cloth that had been pasted over a broken pane met with no greater success: "How frightful!" cried the Marquise. The climax came when I said: "My greatest joy was when I arrived. When I heard my step echoing along the gallery, I felt that I had come into some village council-office, with a map of the district on the wall. This time, Mme. de Cambremer resolutely

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

turned her back on me. "You don't think the arrangement too bad?" her husband asked her with the same compassionate anxiety with which he would have inquired how his wife had stood some painful ceremony. "They have some fine things." But, inasmuch as malice, when the hard and fast rules of sure taste do not confine it within fixed limits, finds fault with everything, in the persons or in the houses, of the people who have supplanted the critic: "Yes, but they are not in the right places. Besides, are they really as fine as all that?" "You noticed," said M. de Cambremer, with a melancholy that was controlled by a note of firmness, "there are some Jouy hangings that are worn away, some quite threadbare things in this drawing-room!" "And that piece of stuff with its huge roses, like a peasant woman's quilt," said Mme. de Cambremer whose purely artificial culture was confined exclusively to idealist philosophy, impressionist painting and Debussy's music. And, so as not to criticise merely in the name of smartness but in that of good taste: "And they have put up windscreens! Such bad style! What can you expect of such people, they don't know, where could they have learned? They must be retired tradespeople. It's really not bad for them." "I thought the chandeliers good," said the Marquis, though it was not evident why he should make an exception of the chandeliers, just as inevitably, whenever anyone spoke of a church, whether it was the Cathedral of Chartres, or of Rheims, or of Amiens, or the church at Balbec, what he would always make a point of mentioning as admirable would be: "the organ-loft, the pulpit and the misericords." "As for the garden, don't speak about it," said Mme. de Cambremer. "It's a massacre.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Those paths running all crooked." I seized the opportunity while Mme. Verdurin was pouring out coffee to go and glance over the letter which M. de Cambremer had brought me, and in which his mother invited me to dinner. With that faint trace of ink, the handwriting revealed an individuality which in the future I should be able to recognise among a thousand, without any more need to have recourse to the hypothesis of special pens, than to suppose that rare and mysteriously blended colours are necessary to enable a painter to express his original vision. Indeed a paralytic, stricken with agraphia after a seizure, and compelled to look at the script as at a drawing without being able to read it, would have gathered that Mme. de Cambremer belonged to an old family in which the zealous cultivation of literature and the arts had supplied a margin to its aristocratic traditions. He would have guessed also the period in which the Marquise had learned simultaneously to write and to play Chopin's music. It was the time when well-bred people observed the rule of affability and what was called the rule of the three adjectives. Mme. de Cambremer combined the two rules in one. A laudatory adjective was not enough for her, she followed it (after a little stroke of the pen) with a second, then (after another stroke) with a third. But, what was peculiar to herself was that, in defiance of the literary and social object at which she aimed, the sequence of the three epithets assumed in Mme. de Cambremer's notes the aspect not of a progression but of a diminuendo. Mme. de Cambremer told me in this first letter that she had seen Saint-Loup and had appreciated more than ever his "unique—rare—real" qualities, that he was coming to them again with one of his friends (the

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

one who was in love with her daughter-in-law), and that if I cared to come, with or without them, to dine at Féterne she would be "delighted—happy—pleased." Perhaps it was because her desire to be friendly outran the fertility of her imagination and the riches of her vocabulary that the lady, while determined to utter three exclamations, was incapable of making the second and third anything more than feeble echoes of the first. Add but a fourth adjective, and, of her initial friendliness, there would be nothing left. Moreover, with a certain refined simplicity which cannot have failed to produce a considerable impression upon her family and indeed in her circle of acquaintance, Mme. de Cambremer had acquired the habit of substituting for the word (which might in time begin to ring false) "sincere," the word "true." And to shew that it was indeed by sincerity that she was impelled, she broke the conventional rule that would have placed the adjective "true" before its noun, and planted it boldly after. Her letters ended with: "*Croyez à ma mon amitié vraie.*" "*Croyez à ma sympathie vraie.*" Unfortunately, this had become so stereotyped a formula that the affectation of frankness was more suggestive of a polite fiction than the time-honoured formulas, of the meaning of which people have ceased to think. I was, however, hindered from reading her letter by the confused sound of conversation over which rang out the louder accents of M. de Charlus, who, still on the same topic, was saying to M. de Cambremer: "You reminded me, when you offered me your chair, of a gentleman from whom I received a letter this morning addressed: 'To His Highness, the Baron de Charlus,' and beginning: 'Monseigneur.'" "To be sure, your correspondent was

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

slightly exaggerating," replied M. de Cambremer, giving way to a discreet show of mirth. M. de Charlus had provoked this; he did not partake in it. "Well, if it comes to that, my dear fellow," he said, "I may observe that, heraldically speaking, he was entirely in the right. I am not regarding it as a personal matter, you understand. I should say the same of anyone else. But one has to face the facts, history is history, we can't alter it and it is not in our power to rewrite it. I need not cite the case of the Emperor William, who at Kiel never ceased to address me as 'Monseigneur.' I have heard it said that he gave the same title to all the Dukes of France, which was an abuse of the privilege, but was perhaps simply a delicate attention aimed over our heads at France herself." "More delicate, perhaps, than sincere," said M. de Cambremer. "Ah! There I must differ from you. Observe that, personally, a gentleman of the lowest rank such as that Hohenzollern, a Protestant to boot, and one who has usurped the throne of my cousin the King of Hanover, can be no favourite of mine," added M. de Charlus, with whom the annexation of Hanover seemed to rankle more than that of Alsace-Lorraine. "But I believe the feeling that turns the Emperor in our direction to be profoundly sincere. Fools will tell you that he is a stage emperor. He is on the contrary marvelously intelligent; it is true that he knows nothing about painting, and has forced Herr Tschudi to withdraw the Elstirs from the public galleries. But Louis XIV did not appreciate the Dutch Masters, he had the same fondness for display, and yet he was, when all is said, a great Monarch. Besides, William II has armed his country from the military and naval point of view in a way that

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

Louis XIV failed to do, and I hope that his reign will never know the reverses that darkened the closing days of him who is fatuously styled the Roi Soleil. The Republic made a great mistake, to my mind, in rejecting the overtures of the Hohenzollern, or responding to them only in driblets. He is very well aware of it himself and says, with that gift that he has for the right expression: 'What I want is a clasped hand, not a raised hat.' As a man, he is vile; he has abandoned, surrendered, denied his best friends, in circumstances in which his silence was as deplorable as theirs was grand," continued M. de Charlus, who was irresistibly drawn by his own tendencies to the Eulenburg affair, and remembered what one of the most highly placed of the culprits had said to him: "The Emperor must have relied upon our delicacy to have dared to allow such a trial. But he was not mistaken in trusting to our discretion. We would have gone to the scaffold with our lips sealed." "All that, however, has nothing to do with what I was trying to explain, which is that, in Germany, mediatised Princes like ourselves are *Durchlaucht*, and in France our rank of Highness was publicly recognised. Saint-Simon tries to make out that this was an abuse on our part, in which he is entirely mistaken. The reason that he gives, namely that Louis XIV forbade us to style him the Most Christian King and ordered us to call him simply the King, proves merely that we held our title from him, and not that we had not the rank of Prince. Otherwise, it would have to be withheld from the Duc de Lorraine and ever so many others. Besides, several of our titles come from the House of Lorraine through Thérèse d'Espinay, my great-grandmother, who was the daughter of the Damoiseau de Commercy."

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Observing that Morel was listening, M. de Charlus proceeded to develop the reasons for his claim. "I have pointed out to my brother that it is not in the third part of Gotha, but in the second, not to say the first, that the account of our family ought to be included," he said, without stopping to think that Morel did not know what "Gotha" was. "But that is his affair, he is the Head of my House, and so long as he raises no objection and allows the matter to pass, I have only to shut my eyes." "M. Brichot interests me greatly," I said to Mme. de Verdurin as she joined me, and I slipped Mme. de Cambremer's letter into my pocket. "He has a cultured mind and is an excellent man," she replied coldly. "Of course what he lacks is originality and taste, he has a terrible memory. They used to say of the 'forebears' of the people we have here this evening, the *émigrés*, that they had forgotten nothing. But they had at least the excuse," she said, borrowing one of Swann's epigrams, "that they had learned nothing. Whereas Brichot knows everything, and hurls chunks of dictionary at our heads during dinner. I'm sure you know everything now about the names of all the towns and villages." While Mme. Verdurin was speaking, it occurred to me that I had determined to ask her something, but I could not remember what it was. I could not at this moment say what Mme. Verdurin was wearing that evening. Perhaps even then I was no more able to say, for I have not an observant mind. But feeling that her dress was not unambitious I said to her something polite and even admiring. She was like almost all women, who imagine that a compliment that is paid to them is a literal statement of the truth, and is a judgment impartially, irresisti-

bly pronounced, as though it referred to a work of art that has no connexion with a person. And so it was with an earnestness which made me blush for my own hypocrisy that she replied with the proud and artless question, habitual in the circumstances: "You like it?" "I know you're talking about Brichot. Eh, Chantepie, Freycinet, he spared you nothing. I had my eye on you, my little Mistress!" "I saw you, it was all I could do not to laugh." "You are talking about Chantepie, I am certain," said M. Verdurin, as he came towards us. I had been alone, as I thought of my strip of green cloth and of a scent of wood, in failing to notice that, while he discussed etymologies, Brichot had been provoking derision. And inasmuch as the expressions which, for me, gave their value to things were of the sort which other people either do not feel or reject without thinking of them, as unimportant, they were entirely useless to me and had the additional drawback of making me appear stupid in the eyes of Mme. Verdurin who saw that I had "swallowed" Brichot, as before I had appeared stupid to Mme. de Guermantes, because I enjoyed going to see Mme. d'Arpajon. With Brichot, however, there was another reason. I was not one of the little clan. And in every clan, whether it be social, political, literary, one contracts a perverse facility in discovering in a conversation, in an official speech, in a story, in a sonnet, everything that the honest reader would never have dreamed of finding there. How many times have I found myself, after reading with a certain emotion a tale skilfully told by a learned and slightly old-fashioned Academician, on the point of saying to Bloch or to Mme. de Guermantes: "How charming this is!" when before I had opened my

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

mouth they exclaimed, each in a different language: "If you want to be really amused, read a tale by So-and-so. Human stupidity has never sunk to greater depths." Bloch's scorn was aroused principally by the discovery that certain effects of style, pleasant enough in themselves, were slightly faded; that of Mme. de Guermantes because the tale seemed to prove the direct opposite of what the author meant, for reasons of fact which she had the ingenuity to deduce but which would never have occurred to me. I was no less surprised to discover the irony that underlay the Verdurins' apparent friendliness for Brichot than to hear, some days later, at Féterne, the Cambremers say to me, on hearing my enthusiastic praise of *la Raspelière*: "It's impossible that you can be sincere, after all they've done to it." It is true that they admitted that the china was good. Like the shocking windscreens, it had escaped my notice. "Anyhow, when you go back to Balbec, you will know what Balbec means," said M. Verdurin ironically. It was precisely the things Brichot had told me that interested me. As for what they called his mind, it was exactly the same mind that had at one time been so highly appreciated by the little clan. He talked with the same irritating fluency, but his words no longer carried, having to overcome a hostile silence or disagreeable echoes; what had altered was not the things that he said but the acoustics of the room and the attitude of his audience. "Take care," Mme. Verdurin murmured, pointing to Brichot. The latter, whose hearing remained keener than his vision, darted at the mistress the hastily withdrawn gaze of a short-sighted philosopher. If his bodily eyes were less good, his mind's eye on the contrary had begun to take a larger view of things. He

saw how little was to be expected of human affection, and resigned himself to it. Undoubtedly the discovery pained him. It may happen that even the man who on one evening only, in a circle where he is usually greeted with joy, realises that the others have found him too frivolous or too pedantic or too loud, or too forward, or whatever it may be, returns home miserable. Often it is a difference of opinion, or of system, that has made him appear to other people absurd or old-fashioned. Often he is perfectly well aware that those others are inferior to himself. He could easily dissect the sophistries with which he has been tacitly condemned, he is tempted to pay a call, to write a letter: on second thoughts, he does nothing, awaits the invitation for the following week. Sometimes, too, these discomfitures, instead of ending with the evening, last for months. Arising from the instability of social judgments, they increase that instability further. For the man who knows that Mme. X despises him, feeling that he is respected at Mme. Y's, pronounces her far superior to the other and emigrates to her house. This however is not the proper place to describe those men, superior to the life of society but lacking the capacity to realise their own worth outside it, glad to be invited, embittered by being disparaged, discovering annually the faults of the hostess to whom they have been offering incense and the genius of her whom they have never properly appreciated, ready to return to the old love when they shall have felt the drawbacks to be found equally in the new, and when they have begun to forget those of the old. We may judge by these temporary discomfitures the grief that Brichot felt at one which he knew to be final. He was not unaware that Mme. Verdurin some-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

times laughed at him publicly, even at his infirmities, and knowing how little was to be expected of human affection, submitting himself to the facts, he continued nevertheless to regard the Mistress as his best friend. But, from the blush that swept over the scholar's face, Mme. Verdurin saw that he had heard her, and made up her mind to be kind to him for the rest of the evening. I could not help remarking to her that she had not been very kind to Saniette. "What! Not kind to him! Why, he adores us, you can't imagine what we are to him. My husband is sometimes a little irritated by his stupidity, and you must admit that he has every reason, but when that happens why doesn't he rise in revolt, instead of cringing like a whipped dog? It is not honest. I don't like it. That doesn't mean that I don't always try to calm my husband, because if he went too far, all that would happen would be that Saniette would stay away; and I don't want that because I may tell you that he hasn't a penny in the world, he needs his dinners. But after all, if he does mind, he can stay away, it has nothing to do with me, when a person depends on other people he should try not to be such an idiot." "The Duchy of Aumale was in our family for years before passing to the House of France," M. de Charlus was explaining to M. de Cambremer, before a speechless Morel, for whom, as a matter of fact, the whole of this dissertation was, if not actually addressed to him, intended. "We took precedence over all foreign Princes; I could give you a hundred examples. The Princesse de Croy having attempted, at the burial of Monsieur, to fall on her knees after my great-great-grandmother, that lady reminded her sharply that she had not the privilege of the hassock, made the

officer on duty remove it, and reported the matter to the King, who ordered Mme. de Croy to call upon Mme. de Guermantes and offer her apologies. The Duc de Bourgogne having come to us with ushers with raised wands, we obtained the King's authority to have them lowered. I know it is not good form to speak of the merits of one's own family. But it is well known that our people were always to the fore in the hour of danger. Our battle-cry, after we abandoned that of the Dukes of Brabant, was *Passavant!* So that it is fair enough after all that this right to be everywhere the first, which we had established for so many centuries in war, should afterwards have been confirmed to us at Court. And, egad, it has always been admitted there. I may give you a further instance, that of the Princess of Baden. As she had so far forgotten herself as to attempt to challenge the precedence of that same Duchesse de Guermantes of whom I was speaking just now, and had attempted to go in first to the King's presence, taking advantage of a momentary hesitation which my relative may perhaps have shewn (although there could be no reason for it), the King called out: 'Come in, cousin, come in; Mme. de Baden knows very well what her duty is to you.' And it was as Duchesse de Guermantes that she held this rank, albeit she was of no mean family herself, since she was through her mother niece to the Queen of Poland, the Queen of Hungary, the Elector Palatine, the Prince of Savoy-Carignano and the Elector of Hanover, afterwards King of England." "*Maecenas atavis edite regibus!*" said Brichot, addressing M. de Charlus, who acknowledged the compliment with a slight inclination of his head. "What did you say?" Mme. Verdurin asked

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Brichot, anxious to make amends to him for her previous speech. "I was referring, Heaven forgive me, to a dandy who was the pick of the basket" (Mme. Verdurin winced) "about the time of Augustus," (Mme. Verdurin, reassured by the remoteness in time of this basket, assumed a more serene expression) "of a friend of Virgil and Horace who carried their sycophancy to the extent of proclaiming to his face his more than aristocratic, his royal descent, in a word I was referring to Maecenas, a bookworm who was the friend of Horace, Virgil, Augustus. I am sure that M. de Charlus knows all about Maecenas." With a gracious, sidelong glance at Mme. Verdurin, because he had heard her make an appointment with Morel for the day after next and was afraid that she might not invite him also, "I should say," said M. de Charlus, "that Maecenas was more or less the Verdurin of antiquity." Mme. Verdurin could not altogether suppress a smile of satisfaction. She went over to Morel. "He's nice, your father's friend," she said to him. "One can see that he's an educated man, and well bred. He will get on well in our little nucleus. What is his address in Paris?" Morel preserved a haughty silence and merely proposed a game of cards. Mme. Verdurin insisted upon a little violin music first. To the general astonishment, M. de Charlus, who never referred to his own considerable gifts, accompanied, in the purest style, the closing passage (uneasy, tormented, Schumannesque, but, for all that, earlier than Franck's Sonata) of the Sonata for piano and violin by Fauré. I felt that he would furnish Morel, marvellously endowed as to tone and virtuosity, with just those qualities that he lacked, culture and style. But I thought with curiosity of this

combination in a single person of a physical blemish and a spiritual gift. M. de Charlus was not very different from his brother, the Duc de Guermantes. Indeed, a moment ago (though this was rare), he had spoken as bad French as his brother. He having reproached me (doubtless in order that I might speak in glowing terms of Morel to Mme. Verdurin) with never coming to see him, and I having pleaded discretion, he had replied: "But, since it is I that asks you, there is no one but I who am in a position to take offence." This might have been said by the Duc de Guermantes. M. de Charlus was only a Guermantes when all was said. But it had been enough that nature should upset the balance of his nervous system sufficiently to make him prefer to the woman that his brother the Duke would have chosen one of Virgil's shepherds or Plato's disciples, and at once qualities unknown to the Duc de Guermantes and often combined with this want of balance had made M. de Charlus an exquisite pianist, an amateur painter who was not devoid of taste, an eloquent talker. Who would ever have detected that the rapid, eager, charming style with which M. de Charlus played the Schumannesque passage of Fauré's Sonata had its equivalent—one dares not say its cause—in elements entirely physical, in the nervous defects of M. de Charlus? We shall explain later on what we mean by nervous defects, and why it is that a Greek of the time of Socrates, a Roman of the time of Augustus might be what we know them to have been and yet remain absolutely normal men, and not men—women such as we see around us to-day. Just as he had genuine artistic tendencies, which had never come to fruition, so M. de Charlus had, far more than the Duke.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

loved their mother, loved his own wife, and indeed, years after her death, if anyone spoke of her to him would shed tears, but superficial tears, like the perspiration of an over-stout man, whose brow will glisten with sweat at the slightest exertion. With this difference, that to the latter we say: "How hot you are," whereas we pretend not to notice other people's tears. We, that is to say, people in society; for the humbler sort are as distressed by the sight of tears as if a sob were more serious than a hemorrhage. His sorrow after the death of his wife, thanks to the habit of falsehood, did not debar M. de Charlus from a life which was not in harmony with it. Indeed later on, he sank so low as to let it be known that, during the funeral rites, he had found an opportunity of asking the acolyte for his name and address. And it may have been true.

When the piece came to an end, I ventured to ask for some Franck, which appeared to cause Mme. de Cambremer such acute pain that I did not insist. "You can't admire that sort of thing," she said to me. Instead she asked for Debussy's *Fêtes*, which made her exclaim: "Ah! How sublime!" from the first note. But Morel discovered that he remembered the opening bars only, and in a spirit of mischief, without any intention to deceive, began a March by Meyerbeer. Unfortunately, as he left little interval and made no announcement, everybody supposed that he was still playing Debussy, and continued to exclaim "Sublime!" Morel, by revealing that the composer was that not of *Pelléas* but of *Robert le Diable* created a certain chill. Mme. de Cambremer had scarcely time to feel it, for she had just discovered a volume of Scarlatti, and had flung herself upon it with an

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

hysterical impulse. "Oh! Play this, look, this piece, it's divine," she cried. And yet, of this composer long despised, recently promoted to the highest honours, what she had selected in her feverish impatience was one of those infernal pieces which have so often kept us from sleeping, while a merciless pupil repeats them indefinitely on the next floor. But Morel had had enough music, and as he insisted upon cards, M. de Charlus, to be able to join in, proposed a game of whist. "He was telling the Master just now that he is a Prince," said Ski to Mme. Verdurin, "but it's not true, they're quite a humble family of architects." "I want to know what it was you were saying about Maecenas. It interests me, don't you know!" Mme. Verdurin repeated to Brichot, with an affability that carried him off his feet. And so, in order to shine in the Mistress's eyes, and possibly in mine: "Why, to tell you the truth, Madame, Maecenas interests me chiefly because he is the earliest apostle of note of that Chinese god who numbers more followers in France to-day than Brahma, than Christ himself, the all-powerful God Ubedamd." Mme. Verdurin was no longer content, upon these occasions, with burying her head in her hands. She would descend with the suddenness of the insects called ephemeral upon Princess Sherbatoff; were the latter within reach the Mistress would cling to her shoulder, dig her nails into it, and hide her face against it for a few moments like a child playing at hide and seek. Concealed by this protecting screen, she was understood to be laughing until she cried and was as well able to think of nothing at all as people are who while saying a prayer that is rather long take the wise precaution of burying their faces in their hands. Mme. Verdurin used to imi-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

tate them when she listened to Beethoven quartets, so as at the same time to let it be seen that she regarded them as a prayer and not to let it be seen that she was asleep. "I am quite serious, Madame," said Brichot. "Too numerous, I consider, to-day is become the person who spends his time gazing at his navel as though it were the hub of the universe. As a matter of doctrine, I have no objection to offer to some Nirvana which will dissolve us in the great Whole (which, like Munich and Oxford, is considerably nearer to Paris than Asnières or Bois-Colombes), but it is unworthy either of a true Frenchman, or of a true European even, when the Japanese are possibly at the gates of our Byzantium, that socialised antimilitarists should be gravely discussing the cardinal virtues of free verse." Mme. Verdurin felt that she might dispense with the Princess's mangled shoulder, and allowed her face to become once more visible, not without pretending to wipe her eyes and gasping two or three times for breath. But Brichot was determined that I should have my share in the entertainment, and having learned, from those oral examinations which he conducted so admirably, that the best way to flatter the young is to lecture them, to make them feel themselves important, to make them regard you as a reactionary: "I have no wish to blaspheme against the Gods of Youth," he said, with that furtive glance at myself which a speaker turns upon a member of his audience whom he has mentioned by name. "I have no wish to be damned as a heretic and renegade in the Mallarmean chapel in which our new friends, like all the young men of his age, must have served the esoteric mass, at least as an acolyte, and have shewn himself deliquescent or Rosicrucian. But, really,

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

we have seen more than enough of these intellectuals worshipping art with a big A, who, when they can no longer intoxicate themselves upon Zola, inject themselves with Verlaine. Become etheromaniacs out of Baudelairean devotion, they would no longer be capable of the virile effort which the country may, one day or another, demand of them, anaesthetised as they are by the great literary neurosis in the heated, enervating atmosphere, heavy with unwholesome vapours, of a symbolism of the opium-pipe." Feeling incapable of feigning any trace of admiration for Brichot's inept and motley tirade, I turned to Ski and assured him that he was entirely mistaken as to the family to which M. de Charlus belonged; he replied that he was certain of his facts, and added that I myself had said that his real name was Gandin, Le Gandin. "I told you," was my answer, "that Mme. de Cambremer was the sister of an engineer, M. Legrandin. I never said a word to you about M. de Charlus. There is about as much connexion between him and Mme. de Cambremer as between the Great Condé and Racine." "Indeed! I thought there was," said Ski lightly, with no more apology for his mistake than he had made a few hours earlier for the mistake that had nearly made his party miss the train. "Do you intend to remain long on this coast?" Mme. Verdurin asked M. de Charlus, in whom she foresaw an addition to the faithful and trembled lest he should be returning too soon to Paris. "Good Lord, one never knows," replied M. de Charlus in a nasal drawl. "I should like to stay here until the end of September." "You are quite right," said Mme. Verdurin; "that is the time for fine storms at sea." "To tell you the truth, that is not what would influence me. I have for some time

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

past unduly neglected the Archangel Saint Michael, my patron, and I should like to make amends to him by staying for his feast, on the 29th of September, at the Abbey on the Mount." "You take an interest in all that sort of thing?" asked Mme. Verdurin, who might perhaps have succeeded in hushing the voice of her outraged anti-clericalism, had she not been afraid that so long an expedition might make the violinist and the Baron "fail" her for forty-eight hours. "You are perhaps afflicted with intermittent deafness," M. de Charlus replied insolently. "I have told you that Saint Michael is one of my glorious patrons." Then, smiling with a benevolent ecstasy, his eyes gazing into the distance, his voice strengthened by an excitement which seemed now to be not merely aesthetic but religious: "It is so beautiful at the offertory when Michael stands erect by the altar, in a white robe, swinging a golden censer heaped so high with perfumes that the fragrance of them mounts up to God." "We might go there in a party," suggested Mme. Verdurin, notwithstanding her horror of the clergy. "At that moment, when the offertory begins," went on M. de Charlus who, for other reasons but in the same manner as good speakers in Parliament, never replied to an interruption and would pretend not to have heard it, "it would be wonderful to see our young friend Palestrinising, indeed performing an aria by Bach. The worthy Abbot, too, would be wild with joy, and that is the greatest homage, at least the greatest public homage that I can pay to my Holy Patron. What an edification for the faithful! We must mention it presently to the young Angelico of music, a warrior like Saint Michael."

Saniette, summoned to make a fourth, declared that he

did not know how to play whist. And Cottard, seeing that there was not much time left before our train, embarked at once on a game of écarté with Morel. M. Verdurin was furious, and bore down with a terrible expression upon Saniette: "Is there anything in the world that you can play?" he cried, furious at being deprived of the opportunity for a game of whist, and delighted to have found one to insult the old registrar. He, in his terror, did his best to look clever: "Yes, I can play the piano," he said. Cottard and Morel were seated face to face. "Your deal," said Cottard. "Suppose we go nearer to the card-table," M. de Charlus, worried by the sight of Morel in Cottard's company, suggested to M. de Cambremer. "It is quite as interesting as those questions of etiquette which in these days have ceased to count for very much. The only kings that we have left, in France at least, are the kings in the pack of cards, who seem to me to be positively swarming in the hand of our young virtuoso," he added a moment later, from an admiration for Morel which extended to his way of playing cards, to flatter him also, and finally to account for his suddenly turning to lean over the young violinist's shoulder. "I-ee cut," said (imitating the accent of a cardsharp) Cottard, whose children burst out laughing, like his students and the chief dresser, whenever the master, even by the bedside of a serious case, uttered with the emotionless face of an epileptic one of his hackneyed witticisms. "I don't know what to play," said Morel, seeking advice from M. de Charlus. "Just as you please, you're bound to lose, whatever you play, it's all the same (*c'est égal*)."
Egal . . . Ingalli?" said the doctor, with an insinuating, kindly glance at M. de Cambremer. "She was what we call a

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

true diva, she was a dream, a Carmen such as we shall never see again. She was wedded to the part. I used to enjoy too listening to Ingalli—married.” The Marquis drew himself up with that contemptuous vulgarity of well-bred people who do not realise that they are insulting their host by appearing uncertain whether they ought to associate with his guests, and adopt English manners by way of apology for a scornful expression: “Who is that gentleman playing cards, what does he do for a living, what does he *sell*? I rather like to know whom I am meeting, so as not to make friends with any Tom, Dick or Harry. But I didn’t catch his name when you did me the honour of introducing me to him.” If M. Verdurin, availing himself of this phrase, had indeed introduced M. de Cambremer to his fellow-guests, the other would have been greatly annoyed. But, knowing that it was the opposite procedure that was observed, he thought it gracious to assume a genial and modest air, without risk to himself. The pride that M. Verdurin took in his intimacy with Cottard had increased if anything now that the doctor had become an eminent professor. But it no longer found expression in the artless language of earlier days. Then, when Cottard was scarcely known to the public, if you spoke to M. Verdurin of his wife’s facial neuralgia: “There is nothing to be done,” he would say, with the artless self-satisfaction of people who assume that anyone whom they know must be famous, and that everybody knows the name of their family singing-master. “If she had an ordinary doctor, one might look for a second opinion, but when that doctor is called Cottard” (a name which he pronounced as though it were Bouchard or Charcot) “one has simply to bow to the inevitable.”

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

Adopting a reverse procedure, knowing that M. de Cambremer must certainly have heard of the famous Professor Cottard, M. Verdurin adopted a tone of simplicity. "He's our family doctor, a worthy soul whom we adore and who would let himself be torn in pieces for our sakes; he is not a doctor, he is a friend, I don't suppose you have ever heard of him or that his name would convey anything to you, in any case to us it is the name of a very good man, of a very dear friend, Cottard." This name, murmured in a modest tone, took in M. de Cambremer who supposed that his host was referring to some one else. "Cottard? You don't mean Professor Cottard?" At that moment one heard the voice of the said Professor who, at an awkward point in the game, was saying as he looked at his cards: "This is where Greek meets Greek." "Why, yes, to be sure, he is a professor," said M. Verdurin. "What! Professor Cottard! You are not making a mistake! You are quite sure it's the same man! The one who lives in the Rue du Bac!" "Yes, his address is 43, Rue du Bac. You know him?" "But everybody knows Professor Cottard. He's at the top of the tree! You might as well ask me if I knew Bouffe de Saint-Blaise or Courtois-Suffit. I could see when I heard him speak that he was not an ordinary person, that is why I took the liberty of asking you." "Come now, what shall I play, trumps?" asked Cottard. Then abruptly, with a vulgarity which would have been offensive even in heroic circumstances, as when a soldier uses a coarse expression to convey his contempt for death, but became doubly stupid in the safe pastime of a game of cards, Cottard, deciding to play a trump, assumed a sombre, suicidal air, and, borrowing the language of people who are risk-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

ing their skins, played his card as though it were his life, with the exclamation: "There it is, and be damned to it!" It was not the right card to play, but he had a consolation. In the middle of the room, in a deep arm-chair, Mme. Cottard, yielding to the effect, which she always found irresistible, of a good dinner, had succumbed after vain efforts to the vast and gentle slumbers that were overpowering her. In vain might she sit up now, and again, and smile, whether at her own absurdity or from fear of leaving unanswered some polite speech that might have been addressed to her, she sank back, in spite of herself, into the clutches of the implacable and delicious malady. More than the noise, what awakened her thus for an instant only was the glance (which, in her wifely affection she could see even when her eyes were shut, and foresaw, for the same scene occurred every evening and haunted her dreams like the thought of the hour at which one will have to rise), the glance with which the Professor drew the attention of those present to his wife's slumbers. To begin with, he merely looked at her and smiled, for if as a doctor he disapproved of this habit of falling asleep after dinner (or at least gave this scientific reason for growing annoyed later on, but it is not certain whether it was a determining reason, so many and diverse were the views that he held about it), as an all-powerful and teasing husband, he was delighted to be able to make a fool of his wife, to rouse her only partly at first, so that she might fall asleep again and he have the pleasure of waking her afresh.

By this time, Mme. Cottard was sound asleep. "Now then, Léontine, you're snoring," the professor called to her. "I am listening to Mme. Swann, my dear," Mme.

Cottard replied faintly, and dropped back into her lethargy. "It's perfect nonsense," exclaimed Cottard, "she'll be telling us presently that she wasn't asleep. She's like the patients who come to consult us and insist that they never sleep at all." "They imagine it, perhaps," said M. de Cambremer with a laugh. But the doctor enjoyed contradicting no less than teasing, and would on no account allow a layman to talk medicine to him. "People do not imagine that they never sleep," he promulgated in a dogmatic tone. "Ah!" replied the Marquis with a respectful bow, such as Cottard at one time would have made. "It is easy to see," Cottard went on, "that you have never administered, as I have; as much as two grains of trional without succeeding in provoking somnolence." "Quite so, quite so," replied the Marquis, laughing with a superior air, "I have never taken trional, or any of those drugs which soon cease to have any effect but ruin your stomach. When a man has been out shooting all night, like me, in the forest of Chantepie, I can assure you he doesn't need any trional to make him sleep." "It is only fools who say that," replied the Professor. "Trional frequently has a remarkable effect on the nervous tone. You mention trional, have you any idea what it is?" "Well . . . I've heard people say that it is a drug to make one sleep." "You are not answering my question," replied the Professor, who, thrice weekly, at the Faculty, sat on the board of examiners. "I don't ask you whether it makes you sleep or not, but what it is. Can you tell me what percentage it contains of amyl and ethyl?" "No," replied M. de Cambremer with embarrassment. "I prefer a good glass of old brandy or even 345 Port." "Which are ten times

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

as toxic," the Professor interrupted. "As for trional," M. de Cambremer ventured, "my wife goes in for all that sort of thing, you'd better talk to her about it." "She probably knows just as much about it as yourself. In any case, if your wife takes trional to make her sleep, you can see that mine has no need of it. Come along, Léontine, wake up, you're getting ankylosed, did you ever see me fall asleep after dinner? What will you be like when you're sixty, if you fall asleep now like an old woman? You'll go and get fat, you're arresting the circulation. She doesn't even hear what I'm saying." "They're bad for one's health, these little naps after dinner, ain't they, Doctor?" said M. de Cambremer, seeking to rehabilitate himself with Cottard. "After a heavy meal one ought to take exercise." "Stuff and nonsense!" replied the Doctor. "We have taken identical quantities of food from the stomach of a dog that has lain quiet and from the stomach of a dog that has been running about, and it is in the former that digestion is more advanced." "Then it is sleep that stops digestion." "That depends upon whether you mean oesophagic digestion, stomachic digestion, intestinal digestion; it is useless to give you explanations which you would not understand since you have never studied medicine. Now then, Léontine, quick march, it is time we were going." This was not true, for the doctor was going merely to continue his game, but he hoped thus to cut short in a more drastic fashion the slumbers of the deaf mute to whom he had been addressing without a word of response the most learned exhortations. Whether a determination to remain awake survived in Mme. Cottard, even in the state of sleep, or because the armchair offered no support to her head, it

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

was jerked mechanically from left to right, and up and down, in the empty air, like a lifeless object, and Mme. Cottard, with her nodding poll, appeared now to be listening to music, now to be in the last throes of death. Where her husband's increasingly vehement admonitions failed of their effect, her sense of her own stupidity proved successful: "My bath is nice and hot," she murmured, "but the feathers in the dictionary . . ." she exclaimed as she sat bolt upright. "Oh! Good lord, what a fool I am. Whatever have I been saying, I was thinking about my hat, I'm sure I said something silly, in another minute I should have been asleep, it's that wretched fire." Everybody began to laugh, for there was no fire in the room.¹

¹ In the French text of *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, Volume II ends at this point.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

"You are making fun of me," said Mme. Cottard, herself laughing, and raising her hand to her brow to wipe away, with the light touch of a hypnotist and the sureness of a woman putting her hair straight, the last traces of sleep, "I must offer my humble apologies to dear Mme. Verdurin and ask her to tell me the truth." But her smile at once grew sorrowful, for the Professor who knew that his wife sought to please him and trembled lest she should fail, had shouted at her: "Look at yourself in the glass, you are as red as if you had an eruption of acne, you look just like an old peasant." "You know, he is charming," said Mme. Verdurin, "he has such a delightfully sarcastic side to his character. And then, he snatched my husband from the jaws of death when the whole Faculty had given him up. He spent three nights by his bedside, without ever lying down. And so Cottard to me, you know," she went on, in a grave and almost menacing tone, raising her hand to the twin spheres, shrouded in white tresses, of her musical temples, and as though we had wished to assault the doctor, "is sacred! He could ask me for anything in the world! As it is, I don't call him Doctor Cottard, I call him Doctor God! And even in saying that I am slandering him, for this God does everything in his power to remedy some of the disasters for which the other is responsible." "Play a trump," M. de Charlus said to Morel with a delighted air. "A trump, here goes," said the violinist. "You ought to have declared your king first," said M. de Charlus, "you're not paying attention to the game, but how well you play!" "I have the king," said Morel. "He's a fine man," replied the Professor. "What's all that business up there with the sticks?" asked Mme. Verdurin,

drawing M. de Cambremer's attention to a superb es-cutcheon carved over the mantelpiece. "Are they your arms?" she added with an ironical disdain. "No, they are not ours," replied M. de Cambremer. "We bear, *barry of five, embattled counterembattled or and gules, as many trefoils countercharged*. No, those are the arms of the Arrachepels, who were not of our stock, but from whom we inherited the house, and nobody of our line has ever made any changes here. The Arrachepels (formerly Pelvilains, we are told) bore *or five piles coupée in base gules*. When they allied themselves with the Féterne family, their blazon changed, but remained *cantoné within twenty cross crosslets fitchée in base or, a dexter canton ermine*." "That's one for her!" muttered Mme. de Cambremer. "My great-grandmother was a d'Arrachepel or de Rachepel, as you please, for both forms are found in the old charters," continued M. de Cambremer, blushing vividly, for only then did the idea for which his wife had given him credit occur to him, and he was afraid that Mme. Verdurin might have applied to herself a speech which had been made without any reference to her. "The history books say that, in the eleventh century, the first Arrachepel, Macé, named Pelvilain, shewed a special aptitude, in siege warfare, in tearing up piles. Whence the name Arrachepel by which he was ennobled, and the piles which you see persisting through the centuries in their arms. These are the piles which, to render fortifications more impregnable, used to be driven, plugged, if you will pardon the expression, into the ground in front of them, and fastened together laterally. They are what you quite rightly called sticks, though they had nothing to do with the floating sticks of our good Lafon-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

taine. For they were supposed to render a stronghold unassailable. Of course, with our modern artillery, they make one smile. But you must bear in mind that I am speaking of the eleventh century." "It is all rather out of date," said Mme. Verdurin, "but the little campanile has a character." "You have," said Cottard, "the luck of . . . turlututu," a word which he gladly repeated to avoid using Molière's. "Do you know why the king of diamonds was turned out of the army?" "I shouldn't mind being in his shoes," said Morel, who was tired of military service. "Oh! What a bad patriot," exclaimed M. de Charlus, who could not refrain from pinching the violinist's ear. "No, you don't know why the king of diamonds was turned out of the army," Cottard pursued, determined to make his joke, "it's because he has only one eye." "You are up against it, Doctor," said M. de Cambremer, to shew Cottard that he knew who he was. "This young man is astonishing," M. de Charlus interrupted innocently. "He plays like a god." This observation did not find favour with the doctor, who replied: "Never too late to mend. Who laughs last, laughs longest." "Queen, ace," Morel, whom fortune was favouring, announced triumphantly. The doctor bowed his head as though powerless to deny this good fortune, and admitted, spellbound: "That's fine." "We are so pleased to have met M. de Charlus," said Mme. de Cambremer to Mme. Verdurin. "Had you never met him before? He is quite nice, he is unusual, he is *of a period*" (she would have found it difficult to say which), replied Mme. Verdurin with the satisfied smile of a connoisseur, a judge and a hostess. Mme. de Cambremer asked me if I was coming to Féterne with Saint-

Loup. I could not suppress a cry of admiration when I saw the moon hanging like an orange lantern beneath the vault of oaks that led away from the house. "That's nothing, presently, when the moon has risen higher and the valley is lighted up, it will be a thousand times better." "Are you staying any time in this neighbourhood, Madame?" M. de Cambremer asked Mme. Cottard, a speech that might be interpreted as a vague intention to invite and dispensed him for the moment from making any more precise engagement. "Oh, certainly, Sir, I regard this annual exodus as most important for the children. Whatever you may say, they must have fresh air. The Faculty wanted to send me to Vichy; but it is too stuffy there, and I can look after my stomach when those big boys of mine have grown a little bigger. Besides, the Professor, with all the examinations he has to hold, has always got his shoulder to the wheel, and the hot weather tires him dreadfully. I feel that a man needs a thorough rest after he has been on the go all the year like that. Whatever happens we shall stay another month at least." "Ah! In that case we shall meet again." "Besides, I shall be all the more obliged to stay here as my husband has to go on a visit to Savoy, and won't be finally settled here for another fortnight." "I like the view of the valley even more than the sea view," Mme. Verdurin went on. "You are going to have a splendid night for your journey." "We ought really to find out whether the carriages are ready, if you are absolutely determined to go back to Balbec to-night," M. Verdurin said to me, "for I see no necessity for it myself. We could drive you over to-morrow morning. It is certain to be fine. The roads are excellent." I said

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

that it was impossible. "But in any case it is not time yet," the Mistress protested. "Leave them alone, they have heaps of time. A lot of good it will do them to arrive at the station with an hour to wait. They are far happier here. And you, my young Mozart," she said to Morel, not venturing to address M. de Charlus directly, "won't you stay the night. We have some nice rooms facing the sea." "No, he can't," M. de Charlus replied on behalf of the absorbed card-player who had not heard. "He has a pass until midnight only. He must go back to bed like a good little boy, obedient, and well-behaved," he added in a complaisant, mannered, insistent voice, as though he derived some sadic pleasure from the use of this chaste comparison and also from letting his voice dwell, in passing, upon any reference to Morel, from touching him with (failing his fingers) words that seemed to explore his person.

From the sermon that Brichot had addressed to me, M. de Cambremer had concluded that I was a Dreyfusard. As he himself was as anti-Dreyfusard as possible, out of courtesy to a foe, he began to sing me the praises of a Jewish colonel who had always been very decent to a cousin of the Chevregny and had secured for him the promotion he deserved. "And my cousin's opinions were the exact opposite," said M. de Cambremer; he omitted to mention what those opinions were, but I felt that they were as antiquated and misshapen as his own face, opinions which a few families in certain small towns must long have entertained. "Well, you know, I call that really fine!" was M. de Cambremer's conclusion. It is true that he was hardly employing the word "fine" in the aesthetic sense in which it would have

suggested to his wife and mother different works, but works, anyhow, of art. M. de Cambremer often made use of this term, when for instance he was congratulating a delicate person who had put on a little flesh. "What, you have gained half-a-stone in two months. I say, that's fine!" Refreshments were set out on a table. Mme. Verdurin invited the gentlemen to go and choose whatever drinks they preferred. M. de Charlus went and drank his glass and at once returned to a seat by the card-table from which he did not stir. Mme. Verdurin asked him: "Have you tasted my orangeade?" Upon which M. de Charlus, with a gracious smile, in a crystalline tone which he rarely sounded and with endless motions of his lips and body, replied: "No, I preferred its neighbour, it was strawberry-juice, I think, it was delicious." It is curious that a certain order of secret actions has the external effect of a manner of speaking or gesticulating which reveals them. If a gentleman believes or disbelieves in the Immaculate Conception, or in the innocence of Dreyfus, or in a plurality of worlds, and wishes to keep his opinion to himself, you will find nothing in his voice or in his movements that will let you read his thoughts. But on hearing M. de Charlus say in that shrill voice and with that smile and waving his arms: "No, I preferred its neighbour, the strawberry-juice," one could say: "There, he likes the stronger sex," with the same certainty as enables a judge to sentence a criminal who has not confessed, a doctor a patient suffering from general paralysis who himself is perhaps unaware of his malady but has made some mistake in pronunciation from which one can deduce that he will be dead in three years. Perhaps the people who conclude from a man's way of saying: "No,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

I preferred its neighbour, the strawberry-juice," a love of the kind called unnatural, have no need of any such scientific knowledge. But that is because there is a more direct relation between the revealing sign and the secret. Without saying it in so many words to oneself, one feels that it is a gentle, smiling lady who is answering and who appears mannered because she is pretending to be a man and one is not accustomed to seeing men adopt such mannerisms. And it is perhaps more pleasant to think that for long years a certain number of angelic women have been included by mistake in the masculine sex where, in exile, ineffectually beating their wings towards men in whom they inspire a physical repulsion, they know how to arrange a drawing-room, compose "interiors." M. de Charlus was not in the least perturbed that Mme. Verdurin should be standing, and remained installed in his armchair so as to be nearer to Morel. "Don't you think it criminal," said Mme. Verdurin to the Baron, "that that creature who might be enchanting us with his violin should be sitting there at a card-table. When anyone can play the violin like that!" "He plays cards well, he does everything well, he is so intelligent," said M. de Charlus, keeping his eye on the game, so as to be able to advise Morel. This was not his only reason, however, for not rising from his chair for Mme. Verdurin. With the singular amalgam that he had made of the social conceptions at once of a great nobleman and of an amateur of art, instead of being polite in the same way that a man of his world would be, he would create a sort of tableau-vivant for himself after Saint-Simon; and at that moment was amusing himself by impersonating the Maréchal d'Uxelles, who interested him from other as-

pects also, and of whom it is said that he was so proud as to remain seated, with a pretence of laziness, before all the most distinguished persons at court. "By the way, Charlus," said Mme. Verdurin, who was beginning to grow familiar, "you don't know of any ruined old nobleman in your Faubourg who would come to me as porter?" "Why, yes . . . why, yes," replied M. de Charlus with a genial smile, "but I don't advise it." "Why not?" "I should be afraid for your sake, that your smart visitors would call at the lodge and go no farther." This was the first skirmish between them. Mme. Verdurin barely noticed it. There were to be others, alas, in Paris. M. de Charlus remained glued to his chair. He could not, moreover, restrain a faint smile, seeing how his favourite maxims as to aristocratic prestige and middle-class cowardice were confirmed by the so easily won submission of Mme. Verdurin. The Mistress appeared not at all surprised by the Baron's posture, and if she left him it was only because she had been perturbed by seeing me taken up by M. de Cambremer. But first of all, she wished to clear up the mystery of M. de Charlus's relations with Comtesse Molé. "You told me that you knew Mme. de Molé. Does that mean, you go there?" she asked, giving to the words "go there" the sense of being received there, of having received authority from the lady to go and call upon her. M. de Charlus replied with an inflexion of disdain, an affectation of precision and in a sing-song tone: "Yes, sometimes." This "sometimes" inspired doubts in Mme. Verdurin, who asked: "Have you ever met the Duc de Guermantes there?" "Ah! That I don't remember." "Oh!" said Mme. Verdurin, "you

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

don't know the Duc de Guermantes?" "And how should I not know him?" replied M. de Charlus, his lips curving in a smile. This smile was ironical; but as the Baron was afraid of letting a gold tooth be seen, he stopped it with a reverse movement of his lips, so that the resulting sinuosity was that of a good-natured smile. "Why do you say: 'How should I not know him?'" "Because he is my brother," said M. de Charlus carelessly, leaving Mme. Verdurin plunged in stupefaction and in the uncertainty whether her guest was making fun of her, was a natural son, or a son by another marriage. The idea that the brother of the Duc de Guermantes might be called Baron de Charlus never entered her head. She bore down upon me. "I heard M. de Cambremer invite you to dinner just now. It has nothing to do with me, you understand. But for your own sake, I do hope you won't go. For one thing, the place is infested with bores. Oh! If you like dining with provincial Counts and Marquises whom nobody knows, you will be supplied to your heart's content." "I think I shall be obliged to go there once or twice. I am not altogether free, however, for I have a young cousin whom I cannot leave by herself" (I felt that this fictitious kinship made it easier for me to take Albertine about). "But as for the Cambremers, as I have been introduced to them. . . ." "You shall do just as you please. One thing I can tell you: it's extremely unhealthy; when you have caught pneumonia, or a nice little chronic rheumatism, you'll be a lot better off!" "But isn't the place itself very pretty?" "Mmmmyesss. . . . If you like. For my part, I confess frankly that I would a hundred times rather have the view from here over this valley. To be-

gin with, if they'd paid us I wouldn't have taken the other house because the sea air is fatal to M. Verdurin. If your cousin suffers at all from nerves. . . . But you yourself have bad nerves, I think . . . you have choking fits. Very well! You shall see. Go there once, you won't sleep for a week after it; but it's not my business." And without thinking of the inconsistency with what she had just been saying: "If it would amuse you to see the house, which is not bad, pretty is too strong a word, still it is amusing with its old moat, and the old draw-bridge, as I shall have to sacrifice myself and dine there once, very well, come that day, I shall try to bring all my little circle, then it will be quite nice. The day after to-morrow we are going to Harambouville in the carriage. It's a magnificent drive, the cider is delicious. Come with us. You, Brichot, you shall come too. And you too, Ski. That will make a party which, as a matter of fact, my husband must have arranged already. I don't know whom all he has invited, Monsieur de Charlus, are you one of them?" The Baron, who had not heard the whole speech, and did not know that she was talking of an excursion to Harambouville, gave a start. "A strange question," he murmured in a mocking tone by which Mme. Verdurin felt hurt. "Anyhow," she said to me, "before you dine with the Cambremers, why not bring her here, your cousin? Does she like conversation, and clever people? Is she pleasant? Yes, very well then. Bring her with you. The Cambremers aren't the only people in the world. I can understand their being glad to invite her, they must find it difficult to get anyone. Here she will have plenty of fresh air, and lots of clever men. In any case, I am counting on you not to fail me

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

next Wednesday. I heard you were having a tea-party at Rivebelle with your cousin, and M. de Charlus, and I forget who' else. You must arrange to bring the whole lot on here, it would be nice if you all came in a body. It's the easiest thing in the world to get here, the roads are charming; if you like I can send down for you. I can't imagine what you find attractive in Rivebelle, it's infested with mosquitoes. You are thinking perhaps of the reputation of the rock-cakes. My cook makes them far better. I can let you have them, here, Norman rock-cakes, the real article, and shortbread; I need say no more. Ah! If you like the filth they give you at Rivebelle, that I won't give you, I don't poison my guests, Sir, and even if I wished to, my cook would refuse to make such abominations and would leave my service. Those rock-cakes you get down there, you can't tell what they are made of. I knew a poor girl who got peritonitis from them, which carried her off in three days. She was only seventeen. It was sad for her poor mother," added Mme. Verdurin with a melancholy air beneath the spheres of her temples charged with experience and suffering. "However, go and have tea at Rivebelle, if you enjoy being fleeced and flinging money out of the window. But one thing I beg of you, it is a confidential mission I am charging you with, on the stroke of six, bring all your party here, don't allow them to go straggling away by themselves. You can bring whom you please. I wouldn't say that to everybody. But I am sure that your friends are nice, I can see at once that we understand one another. Apart from the little nucleus, there are some very pleasant people coming on Wednesday. You don't know little Madame de Longpont. She is

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

charming, and so witty, not in the least a snob, you will find, you'll like her immensely. And she's going to bring a whole troop of friends too," Mme. Verdurin added to shew me that this was the right thing to do and encourage me by the other's example. "We shall see which has most influence and brings most people, Barbe de Longpont or you. And then I believe somebody's going to bring Bergotte," she added with a vague air, this meeting with a celebrity being rendered far from likely by a paragraph which had appeared in the papers that morning, to the effect that the great writer's health was causing grave anxiety. "Anyhow, you will see that it will be one of my most successful Wednesdays, I don't want to have any boring women. You mustn't judge by this evening, it has been a complete failure. Don't try to be polite, you can't have been more bored than I was, I thought myself it was deadly. It won't always be like to-night, you know! I'm not thinking of the Cambremeres, who are impossible, but I have known society people who were supposed to be pleasant, well, compared with my little nucleus, they didn't exist. I heard you say that you thought Swann clever. I must say, to my mind, his cleverness was greatly exaggerated, but without speaking of the character of the man, which I have always found fundamentally antipathetic, sly, underhand, I have often had him to dinner on Wednesdays. Well, you can ask the others, even compared with Brichot, who is far from being anything wonderful, a good assistant master, whom I got into the Institute, Swann was simply nowhere. He was so dull!" And, as I expressed a contrary opinion: "It's the truth. I don't want to say a word against him to you, since he was your friend, in-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

deed he was very fond of you, he has spoken to me about you in the most charming way, but ask the others here if he ever said anything interesting, at our dinners. That, after all, is the supreme test. Well, I don't know why it was, but Swann, in my house, never seemed to come off, one got nothing out of him. And yet anything there ever was in him he picked up here." I assured her that he was highly intelligent. "No, you only think that, because you haven't known him as long as I have. One got to the end of him very soon. I was always bored to death by him." (Which may be interpreted: "He went to the La Trémoilles and the Guermantes and knew that I didn't.") "And I can put up with anything, except being bored. That, I cannot and will not stand!" Her horror of boredom was now the reason upon which Mme. Verdurin relied to explain the composition of the little group. She did not yet entertain duchesses because she was incapable of enduring boredom, just as she was unable to go for a cruise, because of sea-sickness. I thought to myself that what Mme. Verdurin said was not entirely false, and, whereas the Guermantes would have declared Brichot to be the stupidest man they had ever met, I remained uncertain whether he were not in reality superior, if not to Swann himself, at least to the other people endowed with the wit of the Guermantes who would have had the good taste to avoid and the modesty to blush at his pedantic pleasantries; I asked myself the question as though a fresh light might be thrown on the nature of the intellect by the answer that I should make, and with the earnestness of a Christian influenced by Port-Royal when he considers the problem of Grace. "You will see," Mme. Verdurin continued, "when one

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

has society people together with people of real intelligence, people of our set, that's where one has to see them, the society man who is brilliant in the kingdom of the blind, is only one-eyed here. Besides, the others don't feel at home any longer. So much so that I'm inclined to ask myself whether, instead of attempting mixtures that spoil everything, I shan't start special evenings confined to the bores so as to have the full benefit of my little nucleus. However: you are coming again with your cousin. That's settled. Good. At any rate you will both find something to eat here. Féterne is starvation corner. Oh, by the way, if you like rats, go there at once, you will get as many as you want. And they will keep you there as long as you are prepared to stay. Why, you'll die of hunger. I'm sure, when I go there, I shall have my dinner before I start. The more the merrier, you must come here first and escort me. We shall have high tea, and supper when we get back. Do you like apple-tarts? Yes, very well then, our chef makes the best in the world. You see, I was quite right when I told you that you were meant to live here. So come and stay. You know, there is far more room in the house than people think. I don't speak of it, so as not to let myself in for bores. You might bring your cousin to stay. She would get a change of air from Balbec. With this air here, I maintain I can cure incurables. I have cured them, I may tell you, and not only this time. For I have stayed quite close to here before, a place I discovered and got for a mere song, a very different style of house from their Raspelière. I can shew you it if we go for a drive together. But I admit that even here the air is invigorating. Still, I don't want to say too much

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

about it, the whole of Paris would begin to take a fancy to my little corner. That has always been my luck. Anyhow, give your cousin my message. We shall put you in two nice rooms looking over the valley, you ought to see it in the morning, with the sun shining on the mist! By the way, who is this Robert de Saint-Loup of whom you were speaking?" she said with a troubled air, for she had heard that I was to pay him a visit at Doncières, and was afraid that he might make me fail her. "Why not bring him here instead, if he's not a bore. I have heard of him from Morel; I fancy he's one of his greatest friends," said Mme. Verdurin with entire want of truth, for Saint-Loup and Morel were not even aware of one another's existence. But having heard that Saint-Loup knew M. de Charlus, she supposed that it was through the violinist, and wished to appear to know all about them. "He's not taking up medicine, by any chance, or literature? You know, if you want any help about examinations, Cottard can do anything, and I make what use of him I please. As for the Academy later on, for I suppose he's not old enough yet, I have several votes in my pocket. Your friend would find himself on friendly soil here, and it might amuse him perhaps to see over the house. Life's not very exciting at Doncières. But you shall do just what you please, then you can arrange what you think best," she concluded, without insisting, so as not to appear to be trying to know people of noble birth, and because she always maintained that the system by which she governed the faithful, to wit despotism, was named liberty. "Why, what's the matter with you," she said, at the sight of M. Verdurin who, with gestures of impatience, was making for the wooden terrace that ran along the side of

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

the drawing-room above the valley, like a man who is bursting with rage and must have fresh air. "Has Saniette been annoying you again? But you know what an idiot he is, you have to resign yourself to him, don't work yourself up into such a state. I dislike this sort of thing," she said to me, "because it is bad for him, it sends the blood to his head. But I must say that one would need the patience of an angel at times to put up with Saniette, and one must always remember that it is a charity to have him in the house. For my part I must admit that he's so gloriously silly, I can't help enjoying him. I dare say you heard what he said after dinner: 'I can't play whist, but I can the piano.' Isn't it superb? It is positively colossal, and incidentally quite untrue, for he knows nothing at all about either. But my husband, beneath his rough exterior, is very sensitive, very kind-hearted, and Saniette's self-centred way of always thinking about the effect he is going to make drives him crazy. Come, dear, calm yourself, you know Cottard told you that it was bad for your liver. And it is I that will have to bear the brunt of it all," said Mme. Verdurin. "Tomorrow Saniette will come back all nerves and tears. Poor man, he is very ill indeed. Still, that is no reason why he should kill other people. Besides, even at times when he is in pain, when one would like to be sorry for him, his silliness hardens one's heart. He is really too stupid. You have only to tell him quite politely that these scenes make you both ill, and he is not to come again, since that's what he's most afraid of, it will have a soothing effect on his nerves," Mme. Verdurin whispered to her husband.

One could barely make out the sea from the windows

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

on the right. But those on the other side shewed the valley, now shrouded in a snowy cloak of moonlight. Now and again one heard the voices of Morel and Cottard. "You have a trump?" "Yes." "Ah! You're in luck, you are," said M. de Cambremer to Morel, in answer to his question, for he had seen that the doctor's hand was full of trumps. "Here comes the lady of diamonds," said the doctor. "That's a trump, you know? My trick. But there's isn't a Sorbonne any longer," said the doctor to M. de Cambremer; "there's only the University of Paris." M. de Cambremer confessed his inability to understand why the doctor made this remark to him. "I thought you were talking about the Sorbonne," replied the doctor. "I heard you say: *tu nous la sors bonne*," he added, with a wink, to shew that this was meant for a pun. "Just wait a moment," he said, pointing to his adversary, "I have a Trafalgar in store for him." And the prospect must have been excellent for the doctor, for in his joy his shoulders began to shake rapturously with laughter, which in his family, in the "breed" of the Cottards, was an almost zoological sign of satisfaction. In the previous generation the gesture of rubbing the hands together as though one were soaping them used to accompany this movement. Cottard himself had originally employed both forms simultaneously, but one fine day, nobody ever knew by whose intervention, wifely, professorial perhaps, the rubbing of the hands had disappeared. The doctor, even at dominoes, when he got his adversary on the run, and made him take the double six, which was to him the keenest of pleasures, contented himself with shaking his shoulders. And when—which was as seldom as possible—he went

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

down to his native village for a few days, and met his first cousin, who was still at the hand-rubbing stage, he would say to Mme. Cottard on his return: "I thought poor René very common." "Have you the little dee-ar?" he said, turning to Morel. "No? Then I play this old David." "Then you have five, you have won!" "That's a great victory, Doctor," said the Marquis. "A Pyrrhic victory," said Cottard, turning to face the Marquis and looking at him over his glasses to judge the effect of his remark. "If there is still time," he said to Morel, "I give you your revenge. It is my deal. Ah! no, here come the carriages, it will have to be Friday, and I shall shew you a trick you don't see every day." M. and Mme. Verdurin accompanied us to the door. The Mistress was especially coaxing with Saniette so as to make certain of his returning next time. "But you don't look to me as if you were properly wrapped up, my boy," said M. Verdurin, whose age allowed him to address me in this paternal tone. "One would say the weather had changed." These words filled me with joy, as though the profoundly hidden life, the uprising of different combinations which they implied in nature, hinted at other changes, occurring these in my own life, and created fresh possibilities in it. Merely by opening the door upon the park, before leaving, one felt that a different "weather" had, at that moment, taken possession of the scene; cooling breezes, one of the joys of summer, were rising in the fir plantation (where long ago Mme. de Cambremer had dreamed of Chopin) and almost imperceptibly, in caressing coils, capricious eddies, were beginning their gentle nocturnes. I declined the rug which, on subsequent evenings, I was to accept when Albertine

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

was with me, more to preserve the secrecy of my pleasure than to avoid the risk of cold. A vain search was made for the Norwegian philosopher. Had he been seized by a colic? Had he been afraid of missing the train? Had an aeroplane come to fetch him? Had he been carried aloft in an Assumption? In any case he had vanished without anyone's noticing his departure, like a god. "You are unwise," M. de Cambremer said to me, "it's as cold as charity." "Why charity?" the doctor inquired. "Beware of choking," the Marquis went on. "My sister never goes out at night. However, she is in a pretty bad state at present. In any case you oughtn't to stand about bare-headed, put your tile on at once." "They are not frigorific chokings," said Cottard sententiously. "Oh, indeed!" M. de Cambremer bowed. "Of course, if that's your opinion. . . ." "Opinions of the press!" said the doctor, smiling round his glasses. M. de Cambremer laughed, but, feeling certain that he was in the right, insisted: "All the same," he said, "whenever my sister goes out after dark, she has an attack." "It's no use quibbling," replied the doctor, regardless of his want of manners. "However, I don't practise medicine by the seaside, unless I am called in for a consultation. I am here on holiday." He was perhaps even more on holiday than he would have liked. M. de Cambremer having said to him as they got into the carriage together: "We are fortunate in having quite close to us (not on your side of the bay, on the opposite side, but it is quite narrow at that point) another medical celebrity, Doctor du Boulbon," Cottard, who, as a rule, from "deontology," abstained from criticising his colleagues, could not help exclaiming, as he had exclaimed to me on the

fatal day when we had visited the little casino: "But he is not a doctor. He practises a literary medicine, it is all fantastic therapeutics, charlatanism. All the same, we are on quite good terms. I should take the boat and go over and pay him a visit, if I weren't leaving." But, from the air which Cottard assumed in speaking of du Boulbon to M. de Cambremer, I felt that the boat which he would gladly have taken to call upon him would have greatly resembled that vessel which, in order to go and ruin the waters discovered by another literary doctor, Virgil (who took all their patients from them as well), the doctors of Salerno had chartered, but which sank with them on the voyage. "Good-bye, my dear Saniette, don't forget to come to-morrow, you know how my husband enjoys seeing you. He enjoys your wit, your intellect; yes indeed, you know quite well, he takes sudden moods, but he can't live without seeing you. It's always the first thing he asks me: 'Is Saniette coming? I do so enjoy seeing him.'" "I never said anything of the sort," said M. Verdurin to Saniette with a feigned frankness which seemed perfectly to reconcile what the Mistress had just said with the manner in which he treated Saniette. Then looking at his watch, doubtless so as not to prolong the leave-taking in the damp night air, he warned the coachmen not to lose any time, but to be careful when going down the hill, and assured us that we should be in plenty of time for our train. This was to set down the faithful, one at one station, another at another, ending with myself, for no one else was going as far as Balbec, and beginning with the Cambremers. They, so as not to bring their horses all the way up to la Raspelière at night, took the train with us at Douville-Féterne. The station near-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

est to them was indeed not this, which, being already at some distance from the village, was farther still from the mansion, but la Sogne. On arriving at the station of Douville-Féterne, M. de Cambremer made a point of giving a "piece," as Françoise used to say, to the Verdurins' coachman (the nice, sensitive coachman, with melancholy thoughts), for M. de Cambremer was generous, and in that respect took, rather, "after his mamma." But, possibly because his "papa's" strain intervened at this point, he felt a scruple, or else that there might be a mistake—either on his part, if, for instance, in the dark, he were to give a sou instead of a franc, or on the recipient's who might not perceive the importance of the present that was being given him. And so he drew attention to it: "It is a franc I'm giving you, isn't it?" he said to the coachman, turning the coin until it gleamed in the lamplight, and so that the faithful might report his action to Mme. Verdurin. "Isn't it? Twenty sous is right, as it's only a short drive." He and Mme. de Cambremer left us at la Sogne. "I shall tell my sister," he repeated to me, "that you have choking fits, I am sure she will be interested." I understood that he meant: "will be pleased." As for his wife, she employed, in saying good-bye to me, two abbreviations which, even in writing, used to shock me at that time in a letter, although one has grown accustomed to them since, but which, when spoken, seem to me to-day even to contain in their deliberate carelessness, in their acquired familiarity, something insufferably pedantic: "Pleased to have met you," she said to me: "greetings to Saint-Loup, if you see him." In making this speech, Mme. de Cambremer pronounced the name "Saint-Loupe." I have

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

never discovered who had pronounced it thus in her hearing, or what had led her to suppose that it ought to be so pronounced. However it may be, for some weeks afterwards, she continued to say "Saint-Loupe" and a man who had a great admiration for her and echoed her in every way did the same. If other people said "Saint-Lou," they would insist, would say emphatically "Saint-Loupe," whether to teach the others an indirect lesson or to be different from them. But, no doubt, women of greater brilliance than Mme. de Cambremer told her, or gave her indirectly to understand that this was not the correct pronunciation, and that what she regarded as a sign of originality was a mistake which would make people think her little conversant with the usages of society, for shortly afterwards Mme. de Cambremer was again saying "Saint-Lou," and her admirer similarly ceased to hold out, whether because she had lectured him, or because he had noticed that she no longer sounded the final consonant, and had said to himself that if a woman of such distinction, energy and ambition had yielded, it must have been on good grounds. The worst of her admirers was her husband. Mme. de Cambremer loved to tease other people in a way that was often highly impertinent. As soon as she began to attack me, or anyone else, in this fashion, M. de Cambremer would start watching her victim, laughing the while. As the Marquis had a squint—a blemish which gives an effect of wit to the mirth even of imbeciles—the effect of this laughter was to bring a segment of pupil into the otherwise complete whiteness of his eye. So a sudden rift brings a patch of blue into an otherwise clouded sky. His monocle moreover protected, like the glass over a valuable

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

picture, this delicate operation. As for the actual intention of his laughter, it was hard to say whether it was friendly: "Ah! You rascal! You're in an enviable position, aren't you. You have won the favour of a lady who has a pretty wit!" Or coarse: "Well, Sir, I hope you'll learn your lesson, you've got to eat a slice of humble pie." Or obliging: "I'm here, you know, I take it with a laugh because it's all pure fun, but I shan't let you be ill-treated." Or cruelly accessory: "I don't need to add my little pinch of salt, but you can see, I'm revelling in all the insults she is showering on you. I'm wriggling like a hunchback, therefore I approve, I, the husband. And so, if you should take it into your head to answer back, you would have me to deal with, my young Sir. I should first of all give you a pair of resounding smacks, well aimed, then we should go and cross swords in the forest of Chantepie."

Whatever the correct interpretation of the husband's merriment, the wife's whimsies soon came to an end. Whereupon M. de Cambremer ceased to laugh, the temporary pupil vanished and as one had forgotten for a minute or two to expect an entirely white eyeball, it gave this ruddy Norman an air at once anaemic and ecstatic, as though the Marquis had just undergone an operation, or were imploring heaven, through his monocle, for the palms of martyrdom.

CHAPTER III

The sorrows of M. de Charlus.—His sham duel.—The stations on the “Transatlantic.”—Weary of Albertine, I decide to break with her.

I WAS dropping with sleep. I was taken up to my floor not by the lift-boy, but by the squinting page, who to make conversation informed me that his sister was still with the gentleman who was so rich, and that, on one occasion, when she had made up her mind to return home instead of sticking to her business, her gentleman friend had paid a visit to the mother of the squinting page and of the other more fortunate children, who had very soon made the silly creature return to her protector. “You know, Sir, she’s a fine lady, my sister is. She plays the piano, she talks Spanish. And you would never take her for the sister of the humble employee who brings you up in the lift, she denies herself nothing; Madame has a maid to herself, I shouldn’t be surprised if one day she keeps her carriage. She is very pretty, if you could see her, a little too high and mighty, but, good lord, you can understand that. She’s full of fun. She never leaves a hotel without doing something first in a wardrobe or a drawer, just to leave a little keepsake with the chambermaid who will have to wipe it up. Sometimes she does it in a cab, and after she’s paid her fare, she’ll hide behind a tree, and she doesn’t half laugh when the cabby finds he’s got to clean his cab after her. My father had another stroke of luck when he found my young brother that Indian Prince he used to know long ago. It’s not the same style of thing, of course. But it’s a superb position. The travelling by

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

itself would be a dream. I'm the only one still on the shelf. But you never know. We're a lucky family; perhaps one day I shall be President of the Republic. But I'm keeping you talking" (I had not uttered a single word and was beginning to fall asleep as I listened to the flow of his). "Good-night, Sir. Oh! Thank you, Sir. If everybody had as kind a heart as you, there wouldn't be any poor people left. But, as my sister says, 'there will always have to be the poor so that now that I'm rich I can s—t on them.' You'll pardon the expression. Good-night, Sir."

Perhaps every night we accept the risk of facing, while we are asleep, sufferings which we regard as unreal and unimportant because they will be felt in the course of a sleep which we suppose to be unconscious. And indeed on these evenings when I came back late from la Raspe-lière I was very sleepy. But after the weather turned cold I could not get to sleep at once, for the fire lighted up the room as though there were a lamp burning in it. Only it was nothing more than a blazing log, and—like a lamp too, for that matter, like the day when night gathers—its too bright light was not long in fading; and I entered a state of slumber which is like a second room that we take, into which, leaving our own room, we go when we want to sleep. It has noises of its own and we are sometimes violently awakened by the sound of a bell, perfectly heard by our ears, although nobody has rung. It has its servants, its special visitors who call to take us out so that we are ready to get up when we are compelled to realise, by our almost immediate transmigration into the other room, the room of overnight, that it is empty, that nobody has called. The race that inhabits it is, like

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

that of our first human ancestors, androgynous. A man in it appears a moment later in the form of a woman. Things in it shew a tendency to turn into men, men into friends and enemies. The time that elapses for the sleeper, during these spells of slumber, is absolutely different from the time in which the life of the waking man is passed. Sometimes its course is far more rapid, a quarter of an hour seems a day, at other times far longer, we think we have taken only a short nap, when we have slept through the day. Then, in the chariot of sleep, we descend into depths in which memory can no longer overtake it, and on the brink of which the mind has been obliged to retrace its steps. The horses of sleep, like those of the sun, move at so steady a pace, in an atmosphere in which there is no longer any resistance, that it requires some little aerolith extraneous to ourselves (hurled from the azure by some Unknown) to strike our regular sleep (which otherwise would have no reason to stop, and would continue with a similar motion world without end) and to make it swing sharply round, return towards reality, travel without pause, traverse the regions bordering on life in which presently the sleeper will hear the sounds that come from life, quite vague still, but already perceptible, albeit corrupted—and come to earth suddenly and awake. Then from those profound slumbers we awake in a dawn, not knowing who we are, being nobody, newly born, ready for anything, our brain being emptied of that past which was previously our life. And perhaps it is more pleasant still when our landing at the waking-point is abrupt and the thoughts of our sleep, hidden by a cloak of oblivion, have not time to return to us in order, before sleep ceases. Then, from the black

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

tempest through which we seem to have passed (but we do not even say *we*), we emerge prostrate, without a thought, a *we* that is void of content. What hammer-blow has the person or thing that is lying there received to make it unconscious of anything, stupefied until the moment when memory, flooding back, restores to it consciousness or personality? Moreover, for both these kinds of awakening, we must avoid falling asleep, even into deep slumber, under the law of habit. For everything that habit ensnares in her nets, she watches closely, we must escape her, take our sleep at a moment when we thought we were doing anything else than sleeping, take, in a word, a sleep that does not dwell under the tutelage of foresight, in the company, albeit latent, of reflexion. At least, in these awakenings which I have just described, and which I experienced as a rule when I had been dining overnight at la Raspelière, everything occurred as though by this process, and I can testify to it, I the strange human being who, while he waits for death to release him, lives behind closed shutters, knows nothing of the world, sits motionless as an owl, and like that bird begins to see things a little plainly only when darkness falls. Everything occurs as though by this process, but perhaps only a layer of wadding has prevented the sleeper from taking in the internal dialogue of memories and the incessant verbiage of sleep. For (and this may be equally manifest in the other system, vaster, more mysterious, more astral) at the moment of his entering the waking state, the sleeper hears a voice inside him saying: "Will you come to this dinner to-night, my dear friend, it would be such fun?" and thinks: "Yes, what fun it will be, I shall go"; then, growing wider awake, he

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

suddenly remembers: "My grandmother has only a few weeks to live, the Doctor assures us." He rings, he weeps at the thought that it will not be, as in the past, his grandmother, his dying grandmother, but an indifferent waiter that will come in answer to his summons. Moreover, when sleep bore him so far away from the world inhabited by memory and thought, through an ether in which he was alone, more than alone; not having that companion in whom we perceive things, ourself, he was outside the range of time and its measures. But now the footman is in the room, and he dares not ask him the time, for he does not know whether he has slept, for how many hours he has slept (he asks himself whether it should not be how many days, returning thus with weary body and mind refreshed, his heart sick for home, as from a journey too distant not to have taken a long time). We may of course insist that there is but one time, for the futile reason that it is by looking at the clock that we have discovered to have been merely a quarter of an hour what we had supposed a day. But at the moment when we make this discovery we are a man awake, plunged in the time of waking men, we have deserted the other time. Perhaps indeed more than another time: another life. The pleasures that we enjoy in sleep, we do not include them in the list of the pleasures that we have felt in the course of our existence. To allude only to the most grossly sensual of them all, which of us, on waking, has not felt a certain irritation at having experienced in his sleep a pleasure which, if he is anxious not to tire himself, he is not, once he is awake, at liberty to repeat indefinitely during the day. It seems a positive waste. We have had pleasure, in another life, which is not ours.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Sufferings and pleasures of the dream-world (which generally vanish soon enough after our waking), if we make them figure in a budget, it is not in the current account of our life.

Two times, I have said; perhaps there is only one after all, not that the time of the waking man has any validity for the sleeper, but perhaps because the other life, the life in which he sleeps, is not—in its profounder part—included in the category of time. I came to this conclusion when on the mornings after dinners at la Raspelière I used to lie so completely asleep. For this reason. I was beginning to despair, on waking, when I found that, after I had rung the bell ten times, the waiter did not appear. At the eleventh ring he came. It was only the first after all. The other ten had been mere suggestions in my sleep which still hung about me, of the peal that I had been meaning to sound. My numbed hands had never even moved. Well, on those mornings (and this is what makes me say that sleep is perhaps unconscious of the law of time) my effort to awaken consisted chiefly in an effort to make the obscure, undefined mass of the sleep in which I had just been living enter into the scale of time. It is no easy task; sleep, which does not know whether we have slept for two hours or two days, cannot provide any indication. And if we do not find one outside, not being able to re-enter time, we fall asleep again, for five minutes which seem to us three hours.

I have always said—and have proved by experiment—that the most powerful soporific is sleep itself. After having slept profoundly for two hours, having fought against so many giants, and formed so many lifelong friendships, it is far more difficult to awake than after

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

taking several grammes of veronal. And so, reasoning from one thing to the other, I was surprised to hear from the Norwegian philosopher, who had it from M. Boutroux, "my eminent colleague—pardon me, my brother," what M. Bergson thought of the peculiar effects upon the memory of soporific drugs. "Naturally," M. Bergson had said to M. Boutroux, if one was to believe the Norwegian philosopher, "soporifics, taken from time to time in moderate doses, have no effect upon that solid memory of our every-day life which is so firmly established within us. But there are other forms of memory, loftier, but also more unstable. One of my colleagues lectures upon ancient history. He tells me that if, overnight, he has taken a tablet to make him sleep, he has great difficulty, during his lecture, in recalling the Greek quotations that he requires. The doctor who recommended these tablets assured him that they had no effect upon the memory. 'That is perhaps because you do not have to quote Greek,' the historian answered, not without a note of derisive pride."

I cannot say whether this conversation between M. Bergson and M. Boutroux is accurately reported. The Norwegian philosopher, albeit so profound and so lucid, so passionately attentive, may have misunderstood. Personally, in my own experience I have found the opposite result. The moments of oblivion that come to us in the morning after we have taken certain narcotics have a resemblance that is only partial, though disturbing, to the oblivion that reigns during a night of natural and profound sleep. Now what I find myself forgetting in either case is not some line of Baudelaire, which on the other hand keeps sounding in my ear, it is not some con-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

cept of one of the philosophers above-named, it is the actual reality of the ordinary things that surround me—if I am asleep—my non-perception of which makes me an idiot; it is, if I am awakened and proceed to emerge from an artificial slumber, not the system of Porphyry or Plotinus, which I can discuss as fluently as at any other time, but the answer that I have promised to give to an invitation, the memory of which is replaced by a universal blank. The lofty thought remains in its place; what the soporific has put out of action is the power to act in little things, in everything that demands activity in order to seize at the right moment, to grasp some memory of every-day life. In spite of all that may be said about survival after the destruction of the brain, I observe that each alteration of the brain is a partial death. We possess all our memories, but not the faculty of recalling them, said, echoing M. Bergson, the eminent Norwegian philosopher whose language I have made no attempt to imitate in order not to prolong my story unduly. But not the faculty of recalling them. But what, then, is a memory which we do not recall? Or, indeed, let us go farther. We do not recall our memories of the last thirty years; but we are wholly steeped in them; why then stop short at thirty years, why not prolong back to before our birth this anterior life? The moment that I do not know a whole section of the memories that are behind me, the moment that they are invisible to me, that I have not the faculty of calling them to me, who can assure me that in that *mass* unknown to me there are not some that extend back much farther than my human life. If I can have in me and round me so many memories which I do not remember, this oblivion (a *de facto* oblivion, at least, since

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

I have not the faculty of seeing anything) may extend over a life which I have lived in the body of another man, even upon another planet. A common oblivion effaces all. But what, in that case, signifies that immortality of the soul the reality of which the Norwegian philosopher affirmed? The person that I shall be after death has no more reason to remember the man whom I have been since my birth than the latter to remember what I was before it.

The waiter came in. I did not mention to him that I had rung several times, for I was beginning to realise that hitherto I had only dreamed that I was ringing. I was alarmed nevertheless by the thought that this dream had had the clear precision of experience. Experience would, reciprocally, have the irreality of a dream.

Instead I asked him who it was that had been ringing so often during the night. He told me: "Nobody," and could prove his statement, for the bell-board would have registered any ring. And yet I could hear the repeated, almost furious peals which were still echoing in my ears and were to remain perceptible for several days. It is however seldom that sleep thus projects into our waking life memories that do not perish with it. We can count these aeroliths. If it is an idea that sleep has forged, it soon breaks up into slender, irrecoverable fragments. But, in this instance, sleep had fashioned sounds. More material and simpler, they lasted longer. I was astonished by the relative earliness of the hour, as told me by the waiter. I was none the less refreshed. It is the light sleeps that have a long duration, because, being an intermediate state between waking and sleeping, preserving a somewhat faded but permanent impression of the former,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

they require infinitely more time to refresh us than a profound sleep, which may be short. I felt quite comfortable for another reason. If remembering that we are tired is enough to make us feel our tiredness, saying to oneself: "I am refreshed," is enough to create refreshment. Now I had been dreaming that M. de Charlus was a hundred and ten years old, and had just boxed the ears of his own mother, Madame Verdurin, because she had paid five thousand millions for a bunch of violets; I was therefore assured that I had slept profoundly, had dreamed the reverse of what had been in my thoughts overnight and of all the possibilities of life at the moment; this was enough to make me feel entirely refreshed.

I should greatly have astonished my mother, who could not understand M. de Charlus's assiduity in visiting the Verdurins, had I told her whom (on the very day on which Albertine's toque had been ordered, without a word about it to her, in order that it might come as a surprise) M. de Charlus had brought to dine in a private room at the Grand Hotel, Balbec. His guest was none other than the footman of a lady who was a cousin of the Cambremeres. This footman was very smartly dressed, and, as he crossed the hall, with the Baron, "did the man of fashion" as Saint-Loup would have said in the eyes of the visitors. Indeed, the young page-boys, the Levites who were swarming down the temple steps at that moment because it was the time when they came on duty, paid no attention to the two strangers, one of whom, M. de Charlus, kept his eyes lowered to shew that he was paying little if any to them. He appeared to be trying to carve his way through their midst. "Prosper, dear

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

hope of a sacred nation," he said, recalling a passage from Racine, and applying to it a wholly different meaning. "Pardon?" asked the footman, who was not well up in the classics. M. de Charlus made no reply, for he took a certain pride in never answering questions and in marching straight ahead as though there were no other visitors in the hotel, or no one existed in the world except himself, Baron de Charlus. But, having continued to quote the speech of Josabeth: "Come, come, my children," he felt a revulsion and did not, like her, add: "Bid them approach," for these young people had not yet reached the age at which sex is completely developed, and which appealed to M. de Charlus. Moreover, if he had written to Madame de Chevregny's footman, because he had had no doubt of his docility, he had hoped to meet some one more virile. On seeing him, he found him more effeminate than he would have liked. He told him that he had been expecting some one else, for he knew by sight another of Madame de Chevregny's footmen, whom he had noticed upon the box of her carriage. This was an extremely rustic type of peasant, the very opposite of him who had come, who, on the other hand, regarding his own effeminate ways as adding to his attractiveness, and never doubting that it was this man-of-the-world air that had captivated M. de Charlus, could not even guess whom the Baron meant. "But there is no one else in the house, except one that you can't have given the eye to, he is hideous, just like a great peasant." And at the thought that it was perhaps this rustic whom the Baron had seen, he felt his self-esteem wounded. The Baron guessed this, and, widening his quest: "But I have not taken a vow that I will know only Mme. de Chevregny's

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

men," he said. "Surely there are plenty of fellows in one house or another here or in Paris, since you are leaving soon, that you could introduce to me?" "Oh, no!" replied the footman, "I never go with anyone of my own class. I only speak to them on duty. But there is one very nice person I can make you know." "Who?" asked the Baron. "The Prince de Guermantes." M. de Guermantes was vexed at being offered only a man so advanced in years, one, moreover, to whom he had no need to apply to a footman for an introduction. And so he declined the offer in a dry tone and, not letting himself be discouraged by the menial's social pretensions, began to explain to him again what he wanted, the style, the type, a jockey, for instance, and so on. . . . Fearing lest the solicitor, who went past at that moment, might have heard them, he thought it cunning to shew that he was speaking of anything in the world rather than what his hearer might suspect, and said with emphasis and in ringing tones, but as though he were simply continuing his conversation: "Yes, in spite of my age, I still keep up a passion for collecting, a passion for pretty things, I will do anything to secure an old bronze, an early lustre. I adore the Beautiful." But to make the footman understand the change of subject he had so rapidly executed, M. de Charlus laid such stress upon each word, and what was more, to be heard by the solicitor, he shouted his words so loud that this charade should in itself have been enough to reveal what it concealed from ears more alert than those of the officer of the court. He suspected nothing, any more than any of the other residents in the hotel, all of whom saw a fashionable foreigner in the footman so smartly attired. On the other hand, if the

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

gentlemen were deceived and took him for a distinguished American, no sooner did he appear before the servants than he was spotted by them, as one convict recognises another, indeed scented afar off, as certain animals scent one another. The head waiters raised their eyebrows. Aimé cast a suspicious glance. The wine waiter, shrugging his shoulders, uttered behind his hand (because he thought it polite) an offensive expression which everybody heard. And even our old Françoise, whose sight was failing and who went past at that moment at the foot of the staircase to dine with the *courriers*, raised her head, recognised a servant where the hotel guests never suspected one—as the old nurse Euryclea recognises Ulysses long before the suitors seated at the banquet—and seeing, arm in arm with him, M. de Charlus, assumed an appalled expression, as though all of a sudden slanders which she had heard repeated and had not believed had acquired a heartrending probability in her eyes. She never spoke to me, nor to anyone else, of this incident, but it must have caused a considerable commotion in her brain, for afterwards, whenever in Paris she happened to see “Julien,” to whom until then she had been so greatly attached, she still treated him with politeness, but with a politeness that had cooled and was always tempered with a strong dose of reserve. This same incident led some one else to confide in me: this was Aimé. When I encountered M. de Charlus, he, not having expected to meet me, raised his hand and called out “Good evening” with the indifference—outwardly, at least—of a great nobleman who believes that everything is allowed him and thinks it better not to appear to be hiding anything. Aimé who at that moment was watching him with a suspicious eye

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

and saw that I greeted the companion of the person in whom he was certain that he detected a servant, asked me that same evening who he was. For, for some time past, Aimé had shewn a fondness for talking, or rather, as he himself put it, doubtless in order to emphasise the character—philosophical, according to him—of these talks, “discussing” with me. And as I often said to him that it distressed me that he should have to stand beside the table while I ate instead of being able to sit down and share my meal, he declared that he had never seen a guest shew such “sound reasoning.” He was talking at that moment to two waiters. They had bowed to me, I did not know why their faces were unfamiliar, albeit their conversation sounded a note which seemed to me not to be novel. Aimé was scolding them both because of their matrimonial engagements, of which he disapproved. He appealed to me, I said that I could not have any opinion on the matter since I did not know them. They told me their names, reminded me that they had often waited upon me at Rivebelle. But one had let his moustache grow, the other had shaved his off and had had his head cropped; and for this reason, albeit it was the same head as before that rested upon the shoulders of each of them (and not a different head as in the faulty restorations of Notre-Dame), it had remained almost as invisible to me as those objects which escape the most minute search and are actually staring everybody in the face where nobody notices them, on the mantelpiece. As soon as I knew their names, I recognised exactly the uncertain music of their voices because I saw once more the old face which made it clear. “They want to get married and they haven’t even learned English!” Aimé said to

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

me, without reflecting that I was little versed in the ways of hotel service, and could not be aware that a person who does not know foreign languages cannot be certain of getting a situation. I, who supposed that he would have no difficulty in finding out that the newcomer was M. de Charlus, and indeed imagined that he must remember him, having waited upon him in the dining-room when the Baron came, during my former visit to Balbec, to see Mme. de Villeparisis, I told him his name. Not only did Aimé not remember the Baron de Charlus, but the name appeared to make a profound impression upon him. He told me that he would look for a letter next day in his room which I might perhaps be able to explain to him. I was all the more astonished in that M. de Charlus, when he had wished to give me one of Bergotte's books, at Balbec, the other year, had specially asked for Aimé, whom he must have recognised later on in that Paris restaurant where I had taken luncheon with Saint-Loup and his mistress and where M. de Charlus had come to spy upon us. It is true that Aimé had not been able to execute these commissions in person, being on the former occasion in bed, and on the latter engaged in waiting. I had nevertheless grave doubts as to his sincerity, when he pretended not to know M. de Charlus. For one thing, he must have appealed to the Baron. Like all the upstairs waiters of the Balbec Hotel, like several of the Prince de Guermantes's footmen, Aimé belonged to a race more ancient than that of the Prince, therefore more noble. When you asked for a sitting-room, you thought at first that you were alone. But presently, in the service-room you caught sight of a sculptural waiter, of that ruddy Etruscan kind of which Aimé was typical, slightly

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

aged by excessive consumption of champagne and seeing the inevitable hour approach for Contrexéville water. Not all the visitors asked them merely to wait upon them. The underlings who were young, conscientious, busy, who had mistresses waiting for them outside, made off. Whereupon Aimé reproached them with not being serious. He had every right to do so. He himself was serious. He had a wife and children, and was ambitious on their behalf. And so the advances made to him by a strange lady or gentleman he never repulsed, though it meant his staying all night. For business must come before everything. He was so much of the type that attracted M. de Charlus that I suspected him of falsehood when he told me that he did not know him. I was wrong. The page had been perfectly truthful when he told the Baron that Aimé (who had given him a dressing-down for it next day) had gone to bed (or gone out), and on the other occasion was busy waiting. But imagination outreaches reality. And the page-boy's embarrassment had probably aroused in M. de Charlus doubts as to the sincerity of his excuses that had wounded sentiments of which Aimé had no suspicion. We have seen moreover that Saint-Loup had prevented Aimé from going out to the carriage in which M. de Charlus, who had managed somehow or other to discover the waiter's new address, received a further disappointment. Aimé, who had not noticed him, felt an astonishment that may be imagined when, on the evening of that very day on which I had taken luncheon with Saint-Loup and his mistress, he received a letter sealed with the Guermantes arms, from which I shall quote a few passages here as an example of unilateral insanity in an intelligent man addressing an

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

imbecile endowed with sense. "Sir, I have been unsuccessful, notwithstanding efforts that would astonish many people who have sought in vain to be greeted and welcomed by myself, in persuading you to listen to certain explanations which you have not asked of me but which I have felt it to be incumbent upon my dignity and your own to offer you. I am going therefore to write down here what it would have been more easy to say to you in person. I shall not conceal from you that, the first time that I set eyes upon you at Balbec, I found your face frankly antipathetic." Here followed reflexions upon the resemblance—remarked only on the following day—to a deceased friend to whom M. de Charlus had been deeply attached. "The thought then suddenly occurred to me that you might, without in any way encroaching upon the demands of your profession, come to see me and, by joining me in the card games with which his mirth used to dispel my gloom, give me the illusion that he was not dead. Whatever the nature of the more or less fatuous suppositions which you probably formed, suppositions more within the mental range of a servant (who does not even deserve the name of servant since he has declined to serve) than the comprehension of so lofty a sentiment, you probably thought that you were giving yourself importance, knowing not who I was nor what I was, by sending word to me, when I asked you to fetch me a book, that you were in bed; but it is a mistake to imagine that impolite behaviour ever adds to charm, in which you moreover are entirely lacking. I should have ended matters there had I not, by chance, the following morning, found an opportunity of speaking to you. Your resemblance to my poor friend was so accentuated, ban-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

ishing even the intolerable protuberance of your too prominent chin, that I realised that it was the deceased who at that moment was lending you his own kindly expression so as to permit you to regain your hold over me and to prevent you from missing the unique opportunity that was being offered you. Indeed, although I have no wish, since there is no longer any object and it is unlikely that I shall meet you again in this life, to introduce coarse questions of material interest, I should have been only too glad to obey the prayer of my dead friend (for I believe in the Communion of Saints and in their deliberate intervention in the destiny of the living), that I should treat you as I used to treat him, who had his carriage, his servants, and to whom it was quite natural that I should consecrate the greater part of my fortune since I loved him as a father loves his son. You have decided otherwise. To my request that you should fetch me a book you sent the reply that you were obliged to go out. And this morning when I sent to ask you to come to my carriage, you then, if I may so speak without blasphemy, denied me for the third time. You will excuse my not enclosing in this envelope the lavish gratuity which I intended to give you at Balbec and to which it would be too painful to me to restrict myself in dealing with a person with whom I had thought for a moment of sharing all that I possess. At least you might spare me the trouble of making a fourth vain attempt to find you at your restaurant, to which my patience will not extend." (Here M. de Charlus gave his address, stated the hours at which he would be at home, etc.) "Farewell, Sir. Since I assume that, resembling so strongly the friend whom I have lost, you cannot be entirely stupid, other-

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

wise physiognomy would be a false science, I am convinced that if, one day, you think of this incident again, it will not be without feeling some regret and some remorse. For my part, believe that I am quite sincere in saying that I retain no bitterness. I should have preferred that we should part with a less unpleasant memory than this third futile endeavour. It will soon be forgotten. We are like those vessels which you must often have seen at Balbec, which have crossed one another's course for a moment; it might have been to the advantage of each of them to stop; but one of them has decided otherwise; presently they will no longer even see one another on the horizon and their meeting is a thing out of mind; but, before this final parting, each of them salutes the other, and so at this point, Sir, wishing you all good fortune, does

THE BARON DE CHARLUS."

Aimé had not even read this letter through, being able to make nothing of it and suspecting a hoax. When I had explained to him who the Baron was, he appeared to be lost in thought and to be feeling the regret that M. de Charlus had anticipated. I would not be prepared to swear that he would not at that moment have written a letter of apology to a man who gave carriages to his friends. But in the interval M. de Charlus had made Morel's acquaintance. It was true that, his relations with Morel being possibly Platonic, M. de Charlus occasionally sought to spend an evening in company such as that in which I had just met him in the hall. But he was no longer able to divert from Morel the violent sentiment which, at liberty a few years earlier, had asked nothing better than to fasten itself upon Aimé and had dictated

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the letter which had distressed me, for its writer's sake, when the head waiter shewed me it. It was, in view of the anti-social nature of M. de Charlus's love, a more striking example of the insensible, sweeping force of these currents of passion by which the lover, like a swimmer, is very soon carried out of sight of land. No doubt the love of a normal man may also, when the lover, by the successive invention of his desires, regrets, disappointments, plans, constructs a whole romance about a woman whom he does not know, allow the two legs of the compass to gape at a quite remarkably wide angle. All the same, such an angle was singularly enlarged by the character of a passion which is not generally shared and by the difference in social position between M. de Charlus and Aimé.

Every day I went out with Albertine. She had decided to take up painting again and had chosen as the subject of her first attempts the church of Saint-Jean de la Haise which nobody ever visited and very few had even heard of, a spot difficult to describe, impossible to discover without a guide, slow of access in its isolation, more than half an hour from the Epreville station, after one had long left behind one the last houses of the village of Quetteholme. As to the name Epreville I found that the curé's book and Brichot's information were at variance. According to one, Epreville was the ancient Sprevilla; the other derived the name from Aprivilla. On our first visit we took a little train in the opposite direction from Féterne, that is to say towards Grattevast. But we were in the dog days and it had been a terrible strain simply to go out of doors immediately after luncheon. I should have preferred not to start so soon; the luminous

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

and burning air provoked thoughts of indolence and cool retreats. It filled my mother's room and mine, according to their exposure, at varying temperatures, like rooms in a Turkish bath. Mamma's dressing-room, festooned by the sun with a dazzling, Moorish whiteness, appeared to be sunk at the bottom of a well, because of the four plastered walls on which it looked out, while far above, in the empty space, the sky, whose fleecy white waves one saw slip past, one behind another, seemed (because of the longing that one felt), whether built upon a terrace or seen reversed in a mirror hung above the window, a tank filled with blue water, reserved for bathers. Notwithstanding this scorching temperature, we had taken the one o'clock train. But Albertine had been very hot in the carriage, hotter still in the long walk across country, and I was afraid of her catching cold when she proceeded to sit still in that damp hollow where the sun's rays did not penetrate. Having, on the other hand, as long ago as our first visits to Elstir, made up my mind that she would appreciate not merely luxury but even a certain degree of comfort of which her want of money deprived her, I had made arrangements with a Balbec jobmaster that a carriage was to be sent every day to take us out. To escape from the heat we took the road through the forest of Chantepie. The invisibility of the innumerable birds, some of them almost sea-birds, that conversed with one another from the trees on either side of us, gave the same impression of repose that one has when one shuts one's eyes. By Albertine's side, enchained by her arms within the carriage, I listened to these Oceanides. And when by chance I caught sight of one of these musicians as he flitted from one leaf to

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the shelter of another, there was so little apparent connexion between him and his songs that I could not believe that I beheld their cause in the little body, fluttering, humble, startled and unseeing. The carriage could not take us all the way to the church. I stopped it when we had passed through Quetteholme and bade Albertine good-bye. For she had alarmed me by saying to me of this church as of other buildings, of certain pictures: "What a pleasure it would be to see that with you!" This pleasure was one that I did not feel myself capable of giving her. I felt it myself in front of beautiful things only if I was alone or pretended to be alone and did not speak. But since she supposed that she might, thanks to me, feel sensations of art which are not communicated thus—I thought it more prudent to say that I must leave her, would come back to fetch her at the end of the day, but that in the mean time I must go back with the carriage to pay a call on Mme. Verdurin or on the Cambremers, or even spend an hour with Mamma at Balbec, but never farther afield. To begin with, that is to say. For, Albertine having once said to me petulantly: "It's a bore that Nature has arranged things so badly and put Saint-Jean de la Haise in one direction, la Raspelière in another, so that you're imprisoned for the whole day in the part of the country you've chosen;" as soon as the toque and veil had come I ordered, to my eventual undoing, a motor-car from Saint-Fargeau (*Sanctus Ferreolus*, according to the curé's book). Albertine, whom I had kept in ignorance and who had come to call for me, was surprised when she heard in front of the hotel the purr of the engine, delighted when she learned that this motor was for ourselves. I made her come upstairs for

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

a moment to my room. She jumped for joy. "We are going to pay a call on the Verdurins." "Yes, but you'd better not go dressed like that since you are going to have your motor. There, you will look better in these." And I brought out the toque and veil which I had hidden. "They're for me? Oh! You are an angel," she cried, throwing her arms round my neck. Aimé who met us on the stairs, proud of Albertine's smart attire and of our means of transport, for these vehicles were still comparatively rare at Balbec, gave himself the pleasure of coming downstairs behind us. Albertine, anxious to display herself in her new garments, asked me to have the car opened, as we could shut it later on when we wished to be more private. "Now then," said Aimé to the driver, with whom he was not acquainted and who had not stirred, "don't you (*tu*) hear, you're to open your roof?" For Aimé, sophisticated by hotel life, in which moreover he had won his way to exalted rank, was not as shy as the cab driver to whom Françoise was a "lady"; notwithstanding the want of any formal introduction, plebeians whom he had never seen before he addressed as *tu*, though it was hard to say whether this was aristocratic disdain on his part or democratic fraternity. "I am engaged," replied the chauffeur, who did not know me by sight. "I am ordered for Mlle. Simonet. I can't take this gentleman." Aimé burst out laughing: "Why, you great pumpkin," he said to the driver, whom he at once convinced, "this is Mademoiselle Simonet, and Monsieur, who tells you to open the roof of your car, is the person who has engaged you." And as Aimé, although personally he had no feeling for Albertine, was for my sake proud of the garments she was wearing, he

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

whispered to the chauffeur: "Don't get the chance of driving a Princess like that every day, do you?" On this first occasion it was not I alone that was able to go to la Raspelière as I did on other days, while Albertine painted; she decided to go there with me. She did indeed think that we might stop here and there on our way, but supposed it to be impossible to start by going to Saint-Jean de la Haise. That is to say in another direction, and to make an excursion which seemed to be reserved for a different day. She learned on the contrary from the driver that nothing could be easier than to go to Saint-Jean, which he could do in twenty minutes, and that we might stay there if we chose for hours, or go on much farther, for from Quetteholme to la Raspelière would not take more than thirty-five minutes. We realised this as soon as the vehicle, starting off, covered in one bound twenty paces of an excellent horse. Distances are only the relation of space to time and vary with that relation. We express the difficulty that we have in getting to a place in a system of miles or kilometres which becomes false as soon as that difficulty decreases. Art is modified by it also, when a village which seemed to be in a different world from some other village becomes its neighbour in a landscape whose dimensions are altered. In any case the information that there may perhaps exist a universe in which two and two make five and the straight line is not the shortest way between two points would have astonished Albertine far less than to hear the driver say that it was easy to go in a single afternoon to Saint-Jean and la Raspelière, Douville and Quetteholme, Saint-Mars le Vieux and Saint-Mars le Vêtu, Gourville and Old Balbec, Tourville and Féterne, prisoners hitherto as her-

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

metically confined in the cells of distinct days as long ago were Méséglise and Guermantes, upon which the same eyes could not gaze in the course of one afternoon, delivered now by the giant with the seven-league boots, came and clustered about our tea-time their towers and steeples, their old gardens which the encroaching wood sprang back to reveal.

Coming to the foot of the cliff road, the car took it in its stride, with a continuous sound like that of a knife being ground, while the sea falling away grew broader beneath us. The old rustic houses of Montsurvent ran towards us, clasping to their bosoms vine or rose-bush; the firs of la Raspelière, more agitated than when the evening breeze was rising, ran in every direction to escape from us and a new servant whom I had never seen before came to open the door for us on the terrace, while the gardener's son, betraying a precocious bent, devoured the machine with his gaze. As it was not a Monday we did not know whether we should find Mme. Verdurin, for except upon that day, when she was at home, it was unsafe to call upon her without warning. No doubt she was "principally" at home, but this expression, which Mme. Swann employed at the time when she too was seeking to form her little clan, and to draw visitors to herself without moving towards them, an expression which she interpreted as meaning "on principle," meant no more than "as a general rule," that is to say with frequent exceptions. For not only did Mme. Verdurin like going out, but she carried her duties as a hostess to extreme lengths, and when she had had people to luncheon, immediately after the coffee, liqueurs and cigarettes (notwithstanding the first somnolent effects of the heat and of di-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

gestion in which they would have preferred to watch through the leafy boughs of the terrace the Jersey packet passing over the enamelled sea), the programme included a series of excursions in the course of which her guests, installed by force in carriages, were conveyed, willy-nilly, to look at one or other of the views that abound in the neighbourhood of Douville. This second part of the entertainment was, as it happened (once the effort to rise and enter the carriage had been made), no less satisfactory than the other to the guests, already prepared by the succulent dishes, the vintage wines or sparkling cider to let themselves be easily intoxicated by the purity of the breeze and the magnificence of the views. Mme. Verdurin used to make strangers visit these rather as though they were portions (more or less detached) of her property, which you could not help going to see the moment you came to luncheon with her and which conversely you would never have known had you not been entertained by the Mistress. This claim to arrogate to herself the exclusive right over walks and drives, as over Morel's and formerly Dechambre's playing, and to compel the landscapes to form part of the little clan was not for that matter so absurd as it appears at first sight. Mme. Verdurin deplored the want of taste which, according to her, the Cambremers shewed in the furnishing of la Raspelière and the arrangement of the garden, but still more their want of initiative in the excursions that they took or made their guests take in the surrounding country. Just as, according to her, la Raspelière was only beginning to become what it should always have been now that it was the asylum of the little clan, so she insisted that the Cambremers, perpetually exploring in their barouche, along

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

the railway line, by the shore, the one ugly road that there was in the district, had been living in the place all their lives but did not know it. There was a grain of truth in this assertion. From force of habit, lack of imagination, want of interest in a country which seemed hackneyed because it was so near, the Cambremers when they left their home went always to the same places and by the same roads. To be sure they laughed heartily at the Verdurins' offer to shew them their native country. But when it came to that, they and even their coachman would have been incapable of taking us to the splendid, more or less secret places, to which M. Verdurin brought us, now forcing the barrier of a private but deserted property upon which other people would not have thought it possible to venture, now leaving the carriage to follow a path which was not wide enough for wheeled traffic, but in either case with the certain recompense of a marvellous view. Let us say in passing that the garden at la Raspelière was in a sense a compendium of all the excursions to be made in a radius of many miles. For one thing because of its commanding position, overlooking on one side the valley, on the other the sea, and also because, on one and the same side, the seaward side for instance, clearings had been made through the trees in such a way that from one point you embraced one horizon, from another another. There was at each of these points of view a bench; you went and sat down in turn upon the bench from which there was the view of Balbec, or Parville, or Douville. Even to command a single view one bench would have been placed more or less on the edge of the cliff, another farther back. From the latter you had a foreground of verdure and a horizon which seemed al-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

ready the vastest imaginable, but which became infinitely larger if, continuing along a little path, you went to the next bench from which you scanned the whole amphitheatre of the sea. There you could make out exactly the sound of the waves which did not penetrate to the more secluded parts of the garden, where the sea was still visible but no longer audible. These resting-places bore at la Raspelière among the occupants of the house the name of "views." And indeed they assembled round the mansion the finest views of the neighbouring places, coastline or forest, seen greatly diminished by distance, as Hadrian collected in his villa reduced models of the most famous monuments of different countries. The name that followed the word "view" was not necessarily that of a place on the coast, but often that of the opposite shore of the bay which you could make out, standing out in a certain relief notwithstanding the extent of the panorama. Just as you took a book from M. Verdurin's library to go and read for an hour at the "view of Balbec," so if the sky was clear the liqueurs would be served at the "view of Rivebelle," on condition however that the wind was not too strong, for, in spite of the trees planted on either side, the air up there was keen. To come back to the carriage parties that Mme. Verdurin used to organise for the afternoons, the Mistress, if on her return she found the cards of some social butterfly "on a flying visit to the coast," would pretend to be overjoyed, but was actually broken-hearted at having missed his visit and (albeit people at this date came only to "see the house" or to make the acquaintance for a day of a woman whose artistic salon was famous, but outside the pale in Paris) would at once make M. Verdurin invite him to

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

dine on the following Wednesday. As the tourist was often obliged to leave before that day, or was afraid to be out late, Mme. Verdurin had arranged that on Mondays she was always to be found at teatime. These tea-parties were not at all large, and I had known more brilliant gatherings of the sort in Paris, at the Princesse de Guermantes's, at Mme. de Gallifet's or Mme. d'Arpajon's. But this was not Paris, and the charm of the setting enhanced, in my eyes, not merely the pleasantness of the party but the merits of the visitors. A meeting with some social celebrity, which in Paris would have given me no pleasure, but which at la Raspelière, whither he had come from a distance by Féterne or the forest of Chantepie, changed in character, in importance, became an agreeable incident. Sometimes it was a person whom I knew quite well and would not have gone a yard to meet at the Swanns. But his name sounded differently upon this cliff, like the name of an actor whom one has constantly heard in a theatre, printed upon the announcement, in a different colour, of an extraordinary and gala performance, where his notoriety is suddenly multiplied by the unexpectedness of the rest. As in the country people behave without ceremony, the social celebrity often took it upon him to bring the friends with whom he was staying, murmuring the excuse in Mme. Verdurin's ear that he could not leave them behind as he was living in their house; to his hosts on the other hand he pretended to offer, as a sort of courtesy, the distraction, in a monotonous seaside life, of being taken to a centre of wit and intellect, of visiting a magnificent mansion and of making an excellent tea. This composed at once an assembly of several persons of semi-distinction; and if a little slice of

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

garden with a few trees, which would seem shabby in the country, acquires an extraordinary charm in the Avenue Gabriel or let us say the Rue de Monceau, where only multi-millionaires can afford such a luxury, inversely gentlemen who are of secondary importance at a Parisian party stood out at their full value on a Monday afternoon at la Raspelière. No sooner did they sit down at the table covered with a cloth embroidered in red, beneath the painted panels, to partake of the rock cakes, Norman puff pastry, tartlets shaped like boats filled with cherries like beads of coral, "diplomatic" cakes, than these guests were subjected, by the proximity of the great bowl of azure upon which the window opened, and which you could not help seeing when you looked at them, to a profound alteration, a transmutation which changed them into something more precious than before. What was more, even before you set eyes on them, when you came on a Monday to Mme. Verdurin's, people who in Paris would scarcely turn their heads to look, so familiar was the sight of a string of smart carriages waiting outside a great house, felt their hearts throb at the sight of the two or three broken-down dog-carts drawn up in front of la Raspelière, beneath the tall firs. No doubt this was because the rustic setting was different, and social impressions thanks to this transposition regained a kind of novelty. It was also because the broken-down carriage that one hired to pay a call upon Mme. Verdurin called to mind a pleasant drive and a costly bargain struck with a coachman who had demanded "so much" for the whole day. But the slight stir of curiosity with regard to fresh arrivals, whom it was still impossible to distinguish, made everybody ask himself: "Who can this be?" a question

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

which it was difficult to answer, when one did not know who might have come down to spend a week with the Cambremers or elsewhere, but which people always enjoy putting to themselves in rustic, solitary lives where a meeting with a human creature whom one has not seen for a long time ceases to be the tiresome affair that it is in the life of Paris, and forms a delicious break in the empty monotony of lives that are too lonely, in which even the postman's knock becomes a pleasure. And on the day on which we arrived in a motor-car at la Raspelière, as it was not Monday, M. and Mme. Verdurin must have been devoured by that craving to see people which attacks men and women and inspires a longing to throw himself out of the window in the patient who has been shut up away from his family and friends, for a cure of strict isolation. For the new and more swift-footed servant, who had already made himself familiar with these expressions, having replied that "if Madame has not gone out she must be at the view of Douville," and that he would go and look for her, came back immediately to tell us that she was coming to welcome us. We found her slightly dishevelled, for she came from the flower beds, farmyard and kitchen garden, where she had gone to feed her peacocks and poultry, to hunt for eggs, to gather fruit and flowers to "make her table-centre," which would suggest her park in miniature; but on the table it conferred the distinction of making it support the burden of only such things as were useful and good to eat; for round those other presents from the garden which were the pears, the whipped eggs, rose the tall stems of bugloss, carnations, roses and coreopsis, between which one saw, as between blossoming boundary posts, move

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

from one to another beyond the glazed windows, the ships at sea. From the astonishment which M. and Mme. Verdurin, interrupted while arranging their flowers to receive the visitors that had been announced, shewed upon finding that these visitors were merely Albertine and myself, it was easy to see that the new servant, full of zeal but not yet familiar with my name, had repeated it wrongly and that Mme. Verdurin, hearing the names of guests whom she did not know, had nevertheless bidden him let them in, in her need of seeing somebody, no matter whom. And the new servant stood contemplating this spectacle from the door in order to learn what part we played in the household. Then he made off at a run, taking long strides, for he had entered upon his duties only the day before. When Albertine had quite finished displaying her toque and veil to the Verdurins, she gave me a warning look to remind me that we had not too much time left for what we meant to do. Mme. Verdurin begged us to stay to tea, but we refused, when all of a sudden a suggestion was mooted which would have made an end of all the pleasures that I promised myself from my drive with Albertine: the Mistress, unable to face the thought of tearing herself from us, or perhaps of allowing a novel distraction to escape, decided to accompany us. Accustomed for years past to the experience that similar offers on her part were not well received, and being probably dubious whether this offer would find favour with us, she concealed beneath an excessive assurance the timidity that she felt when addressing us and, without even appearing to suppose that there could be any doubt as to our answer, asked us no question, but said to her husband, speaking of Albertine and myself, as

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

though she were conferring a favour on us: "I shall see them home, myself." At the same time there hovered over her lips a smile that did not belong to them, a smile which I had already seen on the faces of certain people when they said to Bergotte with a knowledgeable air: "I have bought your book, it's not bad," one of those collective, universal smiles which, when they feel the need of them—as we make use of railways and removal vans—individuals borrow, except a few who are extremely refined, like Swann or M. de Charlus on whose lips I have never seen that smile settle. From that moment my visit was poisoned. I pretended not to have understood. A moment later it became evident that M. Verdurin was to be one of the party. "But it will be too far for M. Verdurin," I objected. "Not at all," replied Mme. Verdurin with a condescending, cheerful air, "he says it will amuse him immensely to go with you young people over a road he has travelled so many times; if necessary, he will sit beside the engineer, that doesn't frighten him, and we shall come back quietly by the train like a good married couple. Look at him, he's quite delighted." She seemed to be speaking of an aged and famous painter full of friendliness, who, younger than the youngest, takes a delight in scribbling figures on paper to make his grandchildren laugh. What added to my sorrow was that Albertine seemed not to share it and to find some amusement in the thought of dashing all over the countryside like this with the Verdurins. As for myself, the pleasure that I had vowed that I would take with her was so imperious that I refused to allow the Mistress to spoil it; I invented falsehoods which the irritating threats of Mme. Verdurin made excusable, but which Albertine,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

alas, contradicted. "But we have a call to pay," I said. "What call?" asked Albertine. "You shall hear about it later, there's no getting out of it." "Very well, we can wait outside," said Mme. Verdurin, resigned to anything. At the last minute my anguish at seeing wrested from me a happiness for which I had so longed gave me the courage to be impolite. I refused point blank, alleging in Mme. Verdurin's ear that because of some trouble which had befallen Albertine and about which she wished to consult me, it was absolutely necessary that I should be alone with her. The Mistress appeared vexed: "All right, we shan't come," she said to me in a voice tremulous with rage. I felt her to be so angry that, so as to appear to be giving way a little: "But we might perhaps . . ." I began. "No," she replied, more furious than ever, "when I say no, I mean no." I supposed that I was out of favour with her, but she called us back at the door to urge us not to "fail" on the following Wednesday, and not to come with that contraption, which was dangerous at night, but by the train with the little group, and she made me stop the car, which was moving down hill across the park, because the footman had forgotten to put in the hood the slice of tart and the shortbread which she had had made into a parcel for us. We started off, escorted for a moment by the little houses that came running to meet us with their flowers. The face of the countryside seemed to us entirely changed, so far, in the topographical image that we form in our minds of separate places, is the notion of space from being the most important factor. We have said that the notion of time segregates them even farther. It is not the only factor either. Certain places which we see always in isolation

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

seem to us to have no common measure with the rest, to be almost outside the world, like those people whom we have known in exceptional periods of our life, during our military service, in our childhood, and whom we associate with nothing. In my first year at Balbec there was a piece of high ground to which Mme. de Villeparisis liked to take us because from it you saw only the water and the woods, and which was called Beaumont. As the road that she took to approach it, and preferred to other routes because of its old trees, went up hill all the way, her carriage was obliged to go at a crawling pace and took a very long time. When we reached the top we used to alight, stroll about for a little, get into the carriage again, return by the same road, without seeing a single village, a single country house. I knew that Beaumont was something very special, very remote, very high, I had no idea of the direction in which it was to be found, having never taken the Beaumont road to go anywhere else; besides, it took a very long time to get there in a carriage. It was obviously in the same Department (or in the same Province) as Balbec, but was situated for me on another plane, enjoyed a special privilege of extra-territoriality. But the motor-car respects no mystery, and, having passed beyond Incarville, whose houses still danced before my eyes, as we were going down the cross road that leads to Parville (*Paterni villa*), catching sight of the sea from a natural terrace over which we were passing, I asked the name of the place, and before the chauffeur had time to reply recognised Beaumont, close by which I passed thus unconsciously whenever I took the little train, for it was within two minutes of Parville. Like an officer of my regiment who might have seemed to

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

me a creature apart, too kindly and simple to be of a great family, too remote already and mysterious to be simply of a great family, and of whom I was afterwards to learn that he was the brother-in-law, the cousin of people with whom I was dining, so Beaumont, suddenly brought in contact with places from which I supposed it to be so distinct, lost its mystery and took its place in the district, making me think with terror that Madame Bovary and the Sanseverina might perhaps have seemed to me to be like ordinary people, had I met them elsewhere than in the close atmosphere of a novel. It may be thought that my love of magic journeys by train ought to have prevented me from sharing Albertine's wonder at the motor-car which takes even the invalid wherever he wishes to go and destroys our conception—which I had held hitherto—of position in space as the individual mark, the irreplaceable essence of irremovable beauties. And no doubt this position in space was not to the motor-car, as it had been to the railway train, when I came from Paris to Balbec, a goal exempt from the contingencies of ordinary life, almost ideal at the moment of departure, and, as it remains so at that of arrival, at our arrival in that great dwelling where no one dwells and which bears only the name of the town, the station, seeming to promise at last the accessibility of the town, as though the station were its materialisation. No, the motor-car did not convey us thus by magic into a town which we saw at first in the whole that is summarised by its name, and with the illusions of a spectator in a theatre. It made us enter that theatre by the wings which were the streets, stopped to ask the way of an inhabitant. But, as a compensation for so familiar a progress one has the gropings

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

of the chauffeur uncertain of his way and retracing his course, the "general post" of perspective which sets a castle dancing about with a hill, a church and the sea, while one draws nearer to it, in spite of its vain efforts to hide beneath its primeval foliage; those ever narrowing circles which the motor-car describes round a spellbound town which darts off in every direction to escape it and upon which finally it drops down, straight, into the heart of the valley where it lies palpitating on the ground; so that this position in space, this unique point, which the motor-car seems to have stripped of the mystery of express trains, it gives us on the contrary the impression of discovering, of determining for ourselves as with a compass, of helping us to feel with a more fondly exploring hand, with a finer precision, the true geometry, the fair measure of the earth.

What unfortunately I did not know at that moment and did not learn until more than two years later was that one of the chauffeur's patrons was M. de Charlus, and that Morel, instructed to pay him and keeping part of the money for himself (making the chauffeur triple and quintuple the mileage), had become very friendly with him (while pretending not to know him before other people) and made use of his car for long journeys. If I had known this at the time, and that the confidence which the Verdurins were presently to feel in this chauffeur came, unknown to them, from that source, perhaps many of the sorrows of my life in Paris, in the year that followed, much of my trouble over Albertine would have been avoided, but I had not the slightest suspicion of it. In themselves M. de Charlus's excursions by motor-car with Morel were of no direct interest to me. They were more-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

over confined as a rule to a luncheon or dinner in some restaurant along the coast where M. de Charlus was regarded as an old and penniless servant and Morel, whose duty it was to pay the bill, as a too kind-hearted gentleman. I report the conversation at one of these meals, which may give an idea of the others. It was in a restaurant of elongated shape at Saint-Mars-le-Vêtu. "Can't you get them to remove this thing?" M. de Charlus asked Morel, as though appealing to an intermediary without having to address the staff directly. "This thing" was a vase containing three withered roses with which a well-meaning head waiter had seen fit to decorate the table. "Yes . . ." said Morel in embarrassment. "You don't like roses?" "My request ought on the contrary to prove that I do like them, since there are no roses here" (Morel appeared surprised) "but as a matter of fact I do not care much for them. I am rather sensitive to names; and whenever a rose is at all beautiful, one learns that it is called Baronne de Rothschild or Maréchale Niel, which casts a chill. Do you like names? Have you found beautiful titles for your little concert numbers?" "There is one that is called *Poème triste*." "That is horrible," replied M. de Charlus in a shrill voice that rang out like a blow. "But I ordered champagne?" he said to the head waiter who had supposed he was obeying the order by placing by the diners two glasses of foaming liquid. "Yes, Sir." "Take away that filth, which has no connexion with the worst champagne in the world. It is the emetic known as *cup*, which consists, as a rule, of three rotten strawberries swimming in a mixture of vinegar and soda-water. Yes," he went on, turning again to Morel, "you don't seem to know

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

what a title is. And even in the interpretation of the things you play best, you seem not to be aware of the mediumistic side." "You mean to say?" asked Morel, who, not having understood one word of what the Baron had said, was afraid that he might be missing something of importance, such as an invitation to luncheon. M. de Charlus having failed to regard "You mean to say?" as a question, Morel, having in consequence received no answer, thought it best to change the conversation and to give it a sensual turn: "There, look at the fair girl selling the flowers you don't like; I'm certain she's got a little mistress. And the old woman dining at the table at the end, too." "But how do you know all that?" asked M. de Charlus, amazed at Morel's intuition. "Oh! I can spot them in an instant. If we went out together in a crowd, you would see that I never make a mistake." And anyone looking at Morel at that moment, with his girlish air enshrined in his masculine beauty, would have understood the obscure divination which made him no less obvious to certain women than them to him. He was anxious to supplant Jupien, vaguely desirous of adding to his regular income the profits which, he supposed, the tailor derived from the Baron. "And with boys I am surer still, I could save you from making any mistake. We shall be having the fair soon at Balbec, we shall find lots of things there. And in Paris too, you'll see, you'll have a fine time." But the inherited caution of a servant made him give a different turn to the sentence on which he had already embarked. So that M. de Charlus supposed that he was still referring to girls. "Listen," said Morel, anxious to excite in a fashion which he considered less compromising for himself (albeit it was actually

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

more immoral) the Baron's senses, "what I should like would be to find a girl who was quite pure, make her fall in love with me, and take her virginity." M. de Charlus could not refrain from pinching Morel's ear affectionately, but added innocently: "What good would that be to you? If you took her maidenhead, you would be obliged to marry her." "Marry her?" cried Morel, guessing that the Baron was fuddled, or else giving no thought to the man, more scrupulous in reality than he supposed, to whom he was speaking. "Marry her? Balls! I should promise, but once the little operation was performed, I should clear out and leave her." M. de Charlus was in the habit, when a fiction was capable of causing him a momentary sensual pleasure, of believing in its truth, while keeping himself free to withdraw his credulity altogether a minute later, when his pleasure was at an end. "You would really do that?" he said to Morel with a laugh, squeezing him more tightly still. "And why not?" said Morel, seeing that he was not shocking the Baron by continuing to expound to him what was indeed one of his desires. "It is dangerous," said M. de Charlus. "I should have my kit packed and ready, and buzz off and leave no address." "And what about me?" asked M. de Charlus. "I should take you with me, of course," Morel made haste to add, never having thought of what would become of the Baron who was the least of his responsibilities. "I say, there's a kid I should love to try that game on, she's a little seamstress who keeps a shop in M. le Duc's *hôtel*." "Jupien's girl," the Baron exclaimed, as the wine-waiter entered the room. "Oh! Never," he added, whether because the presence of a third person had cooled his ardour, or because even in

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

this sort of black mass in which he took a delight in defiling the most sacred things, he could not bring himself to allow the mention of people to whom he was bound by ties of friendship. "Jupien is a good man, the child is charming, it would be a shame to make them unhappy." Morel felt that he had gone too far and was silent, but his gaze continued to fix itself in imagination upon the girl for whose benefit he had once begged me to address him as "dear great master" and from whom he had ordered a waistcoat. An industrious worker, the child had not taken any holiday, but I learned afterwards that while the violinist was in the neighbourhood of Balbec she never ceased to think of his handsome face, ennobled by the accident that having seen Morel in my company she had taken him for a "gentleman."

"I never heard Chopin play," said the Baron, "and yet I might have done so, I took lessons from Stamati, but he forbade me to go and hear the Master of the Nocturnes at my aunt Chimay's." "That was damned silly of him," exclaimed Morel. "On the contrary," M. de Charlus retorted warmly, in a shrill voice. "He shewed his intelligence. He had realised that I had a 'nature' and that I would succumb to Chopin's influence. It made no difference, because when I was quite young I gave up music, and everything else, for that matter. Besides one can more or less imagine him," he added in a slow, nasal, drawling tone, "there are still people who did hear him, who can give you an idea. However, Chopin was only an excuse to come back to the mediumistic aspect which you are neglecting."

The reader will observe that, after an interpolation of common parlance, M. de Charlus had suddenly become

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

as precious and haughty in his speech as ever. The idea of Morel's "dropping" without compunction a girl whom he had outraged had given him a sudden and entire pleasure. From that moment his sensual appetites were satisfied for a time and the sadist (a true medium, he, if you like) who had for a few moments taken the place of M. de Charlus had fled, leaving a clear field for the real M. de Charlus, full of artistic refinement, sensibility, goodness. "You were playing the other day the transposition for the piano of the Fifteenth Quartet, which is absurd in itself because nothing could be less pianistic. It is meant for people whose ears are hurt by the too highly strained chords of the glorious Deaf One. Whereas it is precisely that almost bitter mysticism that is divine. In any case you played it very badly and altered all the movements. You ought to play it as though you were composing it: the young Morel, afflicted with a momentary deafness and with a non-existent genius stands for an instant motionless. Then, seized by the divine frenzy, he plays, he composes the opening bars. After which, exhausted by this initial effort, he gives way, letting droop his charming forelock to please Mme. Verdurin, and, what is more, gives himself time to recreate the prodigious quantity of grey matter which he has commandeered for the Pythian objectivation. Then, having regained his strength, seized by a fresh and overmastering inspiration, he flings himself upon the sublime, imperishable phrase which the virtuoso of Berlin" (we suppose M. de Charlus to have meant by this expression Mendelssohn) "was to imitate without ceasing. It is in this, the only really transcendent and animating fashion, that I shall make you play in Paris." When M. de Charlus gave him ad-

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

vice of this sort, Morel was far more alarmed than when he saw the head waiter remove his scorned roses and "cup," for he asked himself with anxiety what effect it would create among his "class." But he was unable to dwell upon these reflexions, for M. de Charlus said to him imperiously: "Ask the head waiter if he has a Bon Chrétien." "A good christian, I don't understand." "Can't you see we've reached the dessert, it's a pear. You may be sure, Mme. de Cambremer has them in her garden, for the Comtesse d'Escarbagnas whose double she is had them. M. Thibaudier sends her them, saying: 'Here is a Bon Chrétien which is worth tasting.'" "No, I didn't know." "I can see that you know nothing. If you have never even read Molière. . . . Oh, well, since you are no more capable of ordering food than of anything else, ask simply for a pear which is grown in this neighbourhood, the Louise-Bonne d'Avranches." "The?" "Wait a minute, since you are so stupid, I shall ask him myself for others, which I prefer. Waiter, have you any Doyennée des Comices? Charlie, you must read the exquisite passage about that pear by the Duchesse Emilie de Clermont-Tonnerre." "No, Sir, there aren't any." Have you Triomphe de Jodoigne?" "No, Sir." "Any Virginie-Dallet? Or Passe-Colmar? No? Very well, since you've nothing, we may as well go. The Duchesse d'Angoulême is not in season yet, come along, Charlie." Unfortunately for M. de Charlus, his want of common sense, perhaps too the chastity of what were probably his relations with Morel, made him go out of his way at this period to shower upon the violinist strange bounties which the other was incapable of understanding, and to which his nature, impulsive in its own way, but

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

mean and ungrateful, could respond only by a harshness or a violence that were steadily intensified and plunged M. de Charlus—formerly so proud, now quite timid—in fits of genuine despair. We shall see how, in the smallest matters, Morel, who fancied himself a M. de Charlus a thousand times more important, completely misunderstood, by taking them literally, the Baron's arrogant information with regard to the aristocracy. Let us for the moment say simply this, while Albertine waits for me at Saint-Jean de la Haise, that if there was one thing which Morel set above nobility (and this was in itself distinctly noble, especially in a person whose pleasure was to pursue little girls—on the sly—with the chauffeur), it was his artistic reputation and what the others might think of him in the violin class. No doubt it was an ugly trait in his character that because he felt M. de Charlus to be entirely devoted to him he appeared to disown him, to make fun of him, in the same way as, when I had promised not to reveal the secret of his father's position with my great-uncle, he treated me with contempt. But on the other hand his name, as that of a recognised artist, Morel, appeared to him superior to a "name." And when M. de Charlus, in his dreams of Platonic affection, tried to make him adopt one of his family titles, Morel stoutly refused.

When Albertine thought it better to remain at Saint-Jean de la Haise and paint, I would take the car, and it was not merely to Gourville and Féterne, but to Saint-Mars le Vêtu and as far as Criquetot that I was able to penetrate before returning to fetch her. While pretending to be occupied with anything rather than herself, and to be obliged to forsake her for other pleasures, I thought

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

only of her. As often as not I went no farther than the great plain which overlooks Gourville, and as it resembles slightly the plain that begins above Combray, in the direction of Méséglise, even at a considerable distance from Albertine, I had the joy of thinking that if my gaze could not reach her, still, travelling farther than my vision, that strong and gentle sea breeze which was sweeping past me must be flowing down, without anything to arrest it as far as Quetteholme, until it stirred the branches of the trees that bury Saint-Jean de la Haise in their foliage, caressing the face of my mistress, and must thus be extending a double tie between her and myself in this retreat indefinitely enlarged, but without danger, as in those games in which two children find themselves momentarily out of sight and earshot of one another, and yet, while far apart, remain together. I returned by those roads from which there is a view of the sea, and on which in the past, before it appeared among the branches, I used to shut my eyes to reflect that what I was going to see was indeed the plaintive ancestress of the earth, pursuing as in the days when no living creature yet existed its lunatic, immemorial agitation. Now, these roads were no longer simply the means of rejoining Albertine; when I recognised each of them in their uniformity, knowing how far they would run in a straight line, where they would turn, I remembered that I had followed them while I thought of Mlle. de Stermaria, and also that this same eagerness to find Albertine I had felt in Paris as I walked the streets along which Mme. de Guermantes might pass; they assumed for me the profound monotony, the moral significance of a sort of ruled line that my character must follow. It was natural, and yet it was not

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

without importance; they reminded me that it was my fate to pursue only phantoms, creatures whose reality existed to a great extent in my imagination; there are people indeed—and this had been my case from my childhood—for whom all the things that have a fixed value, assessable by others, fortune, success, high positions, do not count; what they must have, is phantoms. They sacrifice all the rest, leave no stone unturned, make everything else subservient to the capture of some phantom. But this soon fades away; then they run after another, prepared to return later on to the first. It was not the first time that I had gone in quest of Albertine, the girl I had seen that first year outlined against the sea. Other women, it is true, had been interposed between the Albertine whom I had first loved and her from whom I was scarcely separated at this moment; other women, notably the Duchesse de Guermantes. But, the reader will say, why give yourself so much anxiety with regard to Gilberte, take so much trouble over Madame de Guermantes, if, when you have become the friend of the latter, it is with the sole result of thinking no more of her, but only of Albertine? Swann, before his own death, might have answered the question, he who had been a lover of phantoms. Of phantoms pursued, forgotten, sought afresh sometimes for a single meeting and in order to establish contact with an unreal life which at once escaped, these Balbec roads were full. When I thought that their trees, pear trees, apple trees, tamarisks, would outlive me, I seemed to receive from them the warning to set myself to work at last, before the hour should strike of rest everlasting.

I left the carriage at Quetteholme, ran down the sunken

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

path, crossed the brook by a plank and found Albertine painting in front of the church all spires and crockets, thorny and red, blossoming like a rose bush. The lantern alone shewed an unbroken front; and the smiling surface of the stone was abloom with angels who continued, before the twentieth century couple that we were, to celebrate, taper in hand, the ceremonies of the thirteenth. It was they that Albertine was endeavouring to portray on her prepared canvas, and, imitating Elstir, she was laying on the paint in sweeping strokes, trying to obey the noble rhythm set, the great master had told her, by those angels so different from any that he knew. Then she collected her things. Leaning upon one another we walked back up the sunken path, leaving the little church, as quiet as though it had never seen us, to listen to the perpetual sound of the brook. Presently the car started, taking us home by a different way. We passed Marcouville l'Orgueilleuse. Over its church, half new, half restored, the setting sun spread its patina as fine as that of centuries. Through it the great bas-reliefs seemed to be visible only through a floating layer, half liquid, half luminous; the Blessed Virgin, Saint Elizabeth, Saint Joachim swam in the impalpable tide, almost on dry land, on the water's or the sunlight's surface. Rising in a warm dust, the many modern statues reached, on their pillars, halfway up the golden webs of sunset. In front of the church a tall cypress seemed to be in a sort of consecrated enclosure. We left the car for a moment to look at it and strolled for a little. No less than of her limbs, Albertine was directly conscious of her toque of Leghorn straw and of the silken veil (which were for her the source of no less satisfaction), and derived from them, as we

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

strolled round the church, a different sort of impetus, revealed by a contentment which was inert but in which I found a certain charm; veil and toque which were but a recent, adventitious part of my friend, but a part that was already dear to me, as I followed its trail with my eyes, past the cypress in the evening air. She herself could not see it, but guessed that the effect was pleasing, for she smiled at me, harmonising the poise of her head with the headgear that completed it: "I don't like it, it's restored," she said to me, pointing to the church and remembering what Elstir had said to her about the priceless, inimitable beauty of old stone. Albertine could tell a restoration at a glance. One could not help feeling surprised at the sureness of the taste she had already acquired in architecture, as contrasted with the deplorable taste she still retained in music. I cared no more than Elstir for this church, it was with no pleasure to myself that its sunlit front had come and posed before my eyes, and I had got out of the car to examine it only out of politeness to Albertine. I found, however, that the great impressionist had contradicted himself; why exalt this fetish of its objective architectural value, and not take into account the transfiguration of the church by the sunset? "No, certainly not," said Albertine, "I don't like it; I like its name *orgueilleuse*. But what I must remember to ask Brichot is why Saint-Mars is called *le Vêtu*. We shall be going there next, shan't we?" she said, gazing at me out of her black eyes over which her toque was pulled down, like her little polo cap long ago. Her veil floated behind her. I got back into the car with her, happy in the thought that we should be going next day to Saint-Mars, where, in this blazing weather when one could

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

think only of the delights of a bath, the two ancient steeples, salmon-pink, with their lozenge-shaped tiles, gaping slightly as though for air, looked like a pair of old, sharp-snouted fish, coated in scales, moss-grown and red, which without seeming to move were rising in a blue, transparent water. On leaving Marcouville, to shorten the road, we turned aside at a crossroads where there is a farm. Sometimes Albertine made the car stop there and asked me to go alone to fetch, so that she might drink it in the car, a bottle of calvados or cider, which the people assured me was not effervescent, and which proceeded to drench us from head to foot. We sat pressed close together. The people of the farm could scarcely see Albertine in the closed car, I handed them back their bottles; we moved on again, as though to continue that private life by ourselves, that lovers' existence which they might suppose us to lead, and of which this halt for refreshment had been only an insignificant moment; a supposition that would have appeared even less far-fetched if they had seen us after Albertine had drunk her bottle of cider; she seemed then positively unable to endure the existence of an interval between herself and me which as a rule did not trouble her; beneath her linen skirt her legs were pressed against mine, she brought close against my cheeks her own cheeks which had turned pale, warm and red over the cheekbones, with something ardent and faded about them such as one sees in girls from the slums. At such moments, almost as quickly as her personality, her voice changed also, she forsook her own voice to adopt another, raucous, bold, almost dissolute. Night began to fall. What a pleasure to feel her leaning against me, with her toque and her veil, reminding me that it is

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

always thus, seated side by side, that we meet couples who are in love. I was perhaps in love with Albertine, but as I did not venture to let her see my love, although it existed in me, it could only be like an abstract truth, of no value until one has succeeded in checking it by experiment; as it was, it seemed to me unrealisable and outside the plane of life. As for my jealousy, it urged me to leave Albertine as little as possible, although I knew that it would not be completely cured until I had parted from her for ever. I could even feel it in her presence, but would then take care that the circumstances should not be repeated which had aroused it. Once, for example, on a fine morning, we went to luncheon at Rivebelle. The great glazed doors of the dining-room and of that hall in the form of a corridor in which tea was served stood open revealing the sunlit lawns beyond, of which the huge restaurant seemed to form a part. The waiter with the flushed face and black hair that writhed like flames was flying from end to end of that vast expanse less rapidly than in the past, for he was no longer an assistant but was now in charge of a row of tables; nevertheless, owing to his natural activity, sometimes far off, in the dining-room, at other times nearer, but out of doors, serving visitors who had preferred to feed in the garden, one caught sight of him, now here, now there, like successive statues of a young god running, some in the interior, which for that matter was well lighted, of a mansion bounded by a vista of green grass, others beneath the trees, in the bright radiance of an open air life. For a moment he was close to ourselves. Albertine replied absent-mindedly to what I had just said to her. She was gazing at him with rounded eyes. For a minute or

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

two I felt that one may be close to the person whom one loves and yet not have her with one. They had the appearance of being engaged in a mysterious conversation, rendered mute by my presence, and the sequel possibly of meetings in the past of which I knew nothing, or merely of a glance that he had given her,—at which I was the *terzo incomodo*, from whom the others try to hide things. Even when, forcibly recalled by his employer, he had withdrawn from us, Albertine while continuing her meal seemed to be regarding the restaurant and its gardens merely as a lighted running-track, on which there appeared here and there amid the varied scenery the swift-foot god with the black tresses. At one moment I asked myself whether she was not going to rise up and follow him, leaving me alone at my table. But in the days that followed I began to forget for ever this painful impression, for I had decided never to return to Rivebelle, I had extracted a promise from Albertine, who assured me that she had never been there before and would never return there. And I denied that the nimble-footed waiter had had eyes only for her, so that she should not believe that my company had deprived her of a pleasure. It happened now and again that I would revisit Rivebelle, but alone, and drink too much, as I had done there in the past. As I drained a final glass I gazed at a round pattern painted on the white wall, concentrated upon it the pleasure that I felt. It alone in the world had any existence for me; I pursued it, touched it and lost it by turns with my wavering glance, and felt indifferent to the future, contenting myself with my painted pattern like a butterfly circling about a poised butterfly with which it is going to end its life in an act of supreme consummation.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

The moment was perhaps particularly well chosen for giving up a woman whom no very recent or very keen suffering obliged me to ask for this balm for a malady which they possess who have caused it. I was calmed by these very drives, which, even if I did not think of them at the moment save as a foretaste of a morrow which itself, notwithstanding the longing with which it filled me, was not to be different from to-day, had the charm of having been torn from the places which Albertine had frequented hitherto and where I had not been with her, her aunt's house, those of her girl friends. The charm not of a positive joy, but only of the calming of an anxiety, and quite strong nevertheless. For at an interval of a few days, when my thoughts turned to the farm outside which we had sat drinking cider, or simply to the stroll we had taken round Saint-Mars le Vêtu, remembering that Albertine had been walking by my side in her toque, the sense of her presence added of a sudden so strong a virtue to the trivial image of the modern church that at the moment when the sunlit front came thus of its own accord to pose before me in memory, it was like a great soothing compress laid upon my heart. I dropped Albertine at Parville, but only to join her again in the evening and lie stretched out by her side, in the darkness, upon the beach. No doubt I did not see her every day, still I could say to myself: "If she were to give an account of how she spent her time, of her life, it would still be myself that played the largest part in it;" and we spent together long hours on end which brought into my days so sweet an intoxication that even when, at Parville, she jumped from the car which I was to send to fetch her an hour later, I no more felt myself to be alone

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

in it than if before leaving me she had strewn it with flowers. I might have dispensed with seeing her every day; I was going to be happy when I left her, and I knew that the calming effect of that happiness might be prolonged over many days. But at that moment I heard Albertine as she left me say to her aunt or to a girl friend: "Then to-morrow at eight-thirty. We mustn't be late, the others will be ready at a quarter past." The conversation of a woman one loves is like the soil that covers a subterranean and dangerous water; one feels at every moment beneath the words the presence, the penetrating chill of an invisible pool; one perceives here and there its treacherous percolation, but the water itself remains hidden. The moment I heard these words of Albertine, my calm was destroyed. I wanted to ask her to let me see her the following morning, so as to prevent her from going to this mysterious rendezvous at half-past eight which had been mentioned in my presence only in covert terms. She would no doubt have begun by obeying me, while regretting that she had to give up her plans; in time she would have discovered my permanent need to upset them; I should have become the person from whom one hides everything. Besides, it is probable that these gatherings from which I was excluded amounted to very little, and that it was perhaps from the fear that I might find one of the other girls there vulgar or boring that I was not invited to them. Unfortunately this life so closely involved with Albertine's had a reaction not only upon myself; to me it brought calm; to my mother it caused an anxiety, her confession of which destroyed my calm. As I entered the hotel happy in my own mind, determined to terminate, one day soon, an existence the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

end of which I imagined to depend upon my own volition, my mother said to me, hearing me send a message to the chauffeur to go and fetch Albertine: "How you do waste your money." (Françoise in her simple and expressive language said with greater force: "That's the way the money goes.") "Try," Mamma went on, "not to become like Charles de Sévigné, of whom his mother said: 'His hand is a crucible in which money melts.' Besides, I do really think you have gone about quite enough with Albertine. I assure you, you're overdoing it, even to her it may seem ridiculous. I was delighted to think that you found her a distraction, I am not asking you never to see her again, but simply that it may not be impossible to meet one of you without the other." My life with Albertine, a life devoid of keen pleasures—that is to say of keen pleasures that I could feel—that life which I intended to change at any moment, choosing a calm interval, became once again suddenly and for a time necessary to me when, by these words of Mamma's, it found itself threatened. I told my mother that what she had just said would delay for perhaps two months the decision for which she asked, which otherwise I would have reached before the end of that week. Mamma began to laugh (so as not to depress me) at this instantaneous effect of her advice, and promised not to speak of the matter to me again so as not to prevent the rebirth of my good intentions. But, since my grandmother's death, whenever Mamma allowed herself to laugh, the incipient laugh would be cut short and would end in an almost heartbroken expression of sorrow, whether from remorse at having been able for an instant to forget, or else from the recrudescence which this brief moment of oblivion

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

had given to her cruel obsession. But to the thoughts aroused in her by the memory of my grandmother, which was rooted in my mother's mind, I felt that on this occasion there were added others, relative to myself, to what my mother dreaded as the sequel of my intimacy with Albertine; an intimacy to which she dared not, however, put a stop, in view of what I had just told her. But she did not appear convinced that I was not mistaken. She remembered all the years in which my grandmother and she had refrained from speaking to me of my work, and of a more wholesome rule of life which, I said, the agitation into which their exhortations threw me alone prevented me from beginning, and which, notwithstanding their obedient silence, I had failed to pursue. After dinner the car brought Albertine back; there was still a glimmer of daylight; the air was not so warm, but after a scorching day we both dreamed of strange and delicious coolness; then to our fevered eyes the narrow slip of moon appeared at first (as on the evening when I had gone to the Princesse de Guermantes's and Albertine had telephoned to me) like the slight, fine rind, then like the cool section of a fruit which an invisible knife was beginning to peel in the sky. Sometimes too, it was I that went in search of my mistress, a little later in that case; she would be waiting for me before the arcade of the market at Maineville. At first I could not make her out; I would begin to fear that she might not be coming, that she had misunderstood me. Then I saw her in her white blouse with blue spots spring into the car by my side with the light bound of a young animal rather than a girl. And it was like a dog too that she began to caress me interminably. When night had fallen and, as the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

manager of the hotel remarked to me, the sky was all "studied" with stars, if we did not go for a drive in the forest with a bottle of champagne, then, without heeding the strangers who were still strolling upon the faintly lighted front, but who could not have seen anything a yard away on the dark sand, we would lie down in the shelter of the dunes; that same body in whose suppleness abode all the feminine, marine and sportive grace of the girls whom I had seen for the first time pass before a horizon of waves, I held pressed against my own, beneath the same rug, by the edge of the motionless sea divided by a tremulous path of light; and we listened to the sea without tiring and with the same pleasure, both when it held its breath, suspended for so long that one thought the reflux would never come, and when at last it gasped out at our feet the long awaited murmur. Finally I took Albertine back to Parville. When we reached her house, we were obliged to break off our kisses for fear lest some one should see us; not wishing to go to bed she returned with me to Balbec, from where I took her back for the last time to Parville; the chauffeurs of those early days of the motor-car were people who went to bed at all hours. And as a matter of fact I returned to Balbec only with the first dews of morning, alone this time, but still surrounded with the presence of my mistress, gorged with an inexhaustible provision of kisses. On my table I would find a telegram or a postcard. Albertine again! She had written them at Quetteholme when I had gone off by myself in the car, to tell me that she was thinking of me. I got into bed as I read them over. Then I caught sight, over the curtains, of the bright streak of daylight and said to myself that we must be in love with

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

one another after all, since we had spent the night in one another's arms. When next morning I caught sight of Albertine on the front, I was so afraid of her telling me that she was not free that day, and could not accede to my request that we should go out together, that I delayed as long as possible making the request. I was all the more uneasy since she wore a cold, preoccupied air; people were passing whom she knew; doubtless she had made plans for the afternoon from which I was excluded. I looked at her, I looked at that charming body, that blushing head of Albertine, rearing in front of me the enigma of her intentions, the unknown decision which was to create the happiness or misery of my afternoon. It was a whole state of the soul, a whole future existence that had assumed before my eyes the allegorical and fatal form of a girl. And when at last I made up my mind, when with the most indifferent air that I could muster, I asked: "Are we to go out together now, and again this evening?" and she replied: "With the greatest pleasure," then the sudden replacement, in the rosy face, of my long uneasiness by a delicious sense of ease made even more precious to me those outlines to which I was perpetually indebted for the comfort, the relief that we feel after a storm has broken. I repeated to myself: "How sweet she is, what an adorable creature!" in an excitement less fertile than that caused by intoxication, scarcely more profound than that of friendship, but far superior to the excitement of social life. We cancelled our order for the car only on the days when there was a dinner-party at the Verdurins' and on those when, Albertine not being free to go out with me, I took the opportunity to inform anybody who wished to see me that I should be

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

remaining at Balbec. I gave Saint-Loup permission to come on these days, but on these days only. For on one occasion when he had arrived unexpectedly, I had preferred to forego the pleasure of seeing Albertine rather than run the risk of his meeting her, than endanger the state of happy calm in which I had been dwelling for some time and see my jealousy revive. And I had been at my ease only after Saint-Loup had gone. And so he pledged himself, with regret, but with scrupulous observance, never to come to Balbec unless summoned there by myself. In the past, when I thought with longing of the hours that Mme. de Guermantes passed in his company, how I valued the privilege of seeing him! Other people never cease to change places in relation to ourselves. In the imperceptible but eternal march of the world, we regard them as motionless in a moment of vision, too short for us to perceive the motion that is sweeping them on. But we have only to select in our memory two pictures taken of them at different moments, close enough together however for them not to have altered in themselves—perceptibly, that is to say—and the difference between the two pictures is a measure of the displacement that they have undergone in relation to us. He alarmed me dreadfully by talking to me of the Verdurins, I was afraid that he might ask me to take him there, which would have been quite enough, what with the jealousy that I should be feeling all the time, to spoil all the pleasure that I found in going there with Albertine. But fortunately Robert assured me that, on the contrary, the one thing he desired above all others was not to know them. “No,” he said to me, “I find that sort of clerical atmosphere maddening.” I did not at first understand the

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

application of the adjective clerical to the Verdurins, but the end of Saint-Loup's speech threw a light on his meaning, his concessions to those fashions in words which one is often astonished to see adopted by intelligent men. "I mean the houses," he said, "where people form a tribe, a religious order, a chapel. You aren't going to tell me that they're not a little sect; they're all butter and honey to the people who belong, no words bad enough for those who don't. The question is not, as for Hamlet, to be or not to be, but to belong or not to belong. You belong, my uncle Charlus belongs. I can't help it, I never have gone in for that sort of thing, it isn't my fault."

I need hardly say that the rule which I had imposed upon Saint-Loup, never to come and see me unless I had expressly invited him, I promulgated no less strictly for all and sundry of the persons with whom I had gradually begun to associate at la Raspelière, Féterne, Montsurvent, and elsewhere; and when I saw from the hotel the smoke of the three o'clock train which in the anfractuosity of the cliffs of Parville left its stable plume which long remained hanging from the flank of the green slopes, I had no hesitation as to the identity of the visitor who was coming to tea with me and was still, like a classical deity, concealed from me by that little cloud. I am obliged to confess that this visitor, authorised by me beforehand to come, was hardly ever Saniette, and I have often reproached myself for this omission. But Saniette's own consciousness of his being a bore (far more so, naturally, when he came to pay a call than when he told a story) had the effect that, albeit he was more learned, more intelligent and a better man all round than most people, it seemed impossible to feel in his company, I do not say any pleas-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

ure, but anything save an almost intolerable irritation which spoiled one's whole afternoon. Probably if Saniette had frankly admitted this boredom which he was afraid of causing, one would not have dreaded his visits. Boredom is one of the least of the evils that we have to endure, his boringness existed perhaps only in the imagination of other people, or had been inoculated into him by them by some process of suggestion which had taken root in his charming modesty. But he was so anxious not to let it be seen that he was not sought after, that he dared not offer himself. Certainly he was right in not behaving like the people who are so glad to be able to raise their hats in a public place, that when, not having seen you for years, they catch sight of you in a box with smart people whom they do not know, they give you a furtive but resounding good-evening, seeking an excuse in the pleasure, the emotion that they felt on seeing you, on learning that you are going about again, that you are looking well, etc. Saniette, on the contrary, was lacking in courage. He might, at Mme. Verdurin's or in the little tram, have told me that it would give him great pleasure to come and see me at Balbec, were he not afraid of disturbing me. Such a suggestion would not have alarmed me. On the contrary, he offered nothing, but with a tortured expression on his face and a stare as indestructible as a fired enamel, into the composition of which, however, there entered, with a passionate desire to see one—provided he did not find some one else who was more entertaining—the determination not to let this desire be manifest, said to me with a detached air: "You don't happen to know what you will be doing in the next few days, because I shall probably be somewhere in the

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

neighbourhood of Balbec? Not that it makes the slightest difference, I just thought I would ask you." This air deceived nobody, and the inverse signs whereby we express our sentiments by their opposites are so clearly legible that we ask ourselves how there can still be people who say, for instance: "I have so many invitations that I don't know where to lay my head" to conceal the fact that they have been invited nowhere. But what was more, this detached air, probably on account of the heterogeneous elements that had gone to form it, gave you, what you would never have felt in the fear of boredom or in a frank admission of the desire to see you, that is to say that sort of distaste, of repulsion, which in the category of relations of simple social courtesy corresponds to—in that of love—the disguised offer made to a lady by the lover whom she does not love to see her on the following day, he protesting the while that it does not really matter, or indeed not that offer but an attitude of false coldness. There emanated at once from Saniette's person something or other which made you answer him in the tenderest of tones: "No, unfortunately, this week, I must explain to you. . . ." And I allowed to call upon me instead people who were a long way his inferiors but had not his gaze charged with melancholy or his mouth wrinkled with all the bitterness of all the calls which he longed, while saying nothing about them, to pay upon this person and that. Unfortunately it was very rarely that Saniette did not meet in the "crawler" the guest who was coming to see me, if indeed the latter had not said to me at the Verdurins': "Don't forget, I'm coming to see you on Thursday," the very day on which I had just told Saniette that I should not be at home. So that

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

he came in the end to imagine life as filled with entertainments arranged behind his back, if not actually at his expense. On the other hand, as none of us is ever a single person, this too discreet of men was morbidly indiscreet. On the one occasion on which he happened to come and see me uninvited, a letter, I forget from whom, had been left lying on my table. After the first few minutes, I saw that he was paying only the vaguest attention to what I was saying. The letter, of whose subject he knew absolutely nothing, fascinated him and at every moment I expected his glittering eyeballs to detach themselves from their sockets and fly to the letter which, of no importance in itself, his curiosity had made magnetic. You would have called him a bird about to dash into the jaws of a serpent. Finally he could restrain himself no longer, he began by altering its position, as though he were trying to tidy my room. This not sufficing him, he took it up, turned it over, turned it back again, as though mechanically. Another form of his indiscretion was that once he had fastened himself to you he could not tear himself away. As I was feeling unwell that day, I asked him to go back by the next train, in half-an-hour's time. He did not doubt that I was feeling unwell, but replied: "I shall stay for an hour and a quarter, and then I shall go." Since then I have regretted that I did not tell him, whenever I had an opportunity, to come and see me. Who knows? Possibly I might have charmed away his ill fortune, other people would have invited him for whom he would immediately have deserted myself, so that my invitations would have had the twofold advantage of giving him pleasure and ridding me of his company.

On the days following those on which I had been "at

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

home," I naturally did not expect any visitors and the motor-car would come to fetch us, Albertine and myself. And, when we returned, Aimé, on the lowest step of the hotel, could not help looking, with passionate, curious, greedy eyes, to see what tip I was giving the chauffeur. It was no use my enclosing my coin or note in my clenched fist, Aimé's gaze tore my fingers apart. He turned his head away a moment later, for he was discreet, well bred, and indeed was himself content with relatively small wages. But the money that another person received aroused in him an irrepressible curiosity and made his mouth water. During these brief moments, he wore the attentive, feverish air of a boy reading one of Jules Verne's tales, or of a diner seated at a neighbouring table in a restaurant who, seeing the waiter carving for you a pheasant which he himself either could not afford or would not order, abandons for an instant his serious thoughts to fasten upon the bird a gaze which love and longing cause to smile.

And so, day after day, these excursions in the motor-car followed one another. But once, as I was being taken up to my room, the lift-boy said to me: "That gentleman has been, he gave me a message for you." The lift-boy uttered these words in an almost inaudible voice, coughing and expectorating in my face. "I haven't half caught cold!" he went on, as though I were incapable of perceiving this for myself. "The doctor says it's whooping-cough," and he began once more to cough and expectorate over me. "Don't tire yourself by trying to speak," I said to him with an air of kindly interest, which was feigned. I was afraid of catching the whooping-cough which, with my tendency to choking fits, would have

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

been a serious matter to me. But he made a point of honour, like a virtuoso who refuses to let himself be taken to hospital, of talking and expectorating all the time. "No, it doesn't matter," he said ("Perhaps not to you," I thought, "but to me it does"). "Besides, I shall be returning soon to Paris" ("Excellent, provided he doesn't give it to me first"). "It seems," he went on, "that Paris is quite superb. It must be even more superb than here or Monte-Carlo, although pages, in fact visitors, and even head waiters who have been to Monte-Carlo for the season have often told me that Paris was not so superb as Monte-Carlo. They were cheated, perhaps, and yet, to be a head waiter, you've got to have your wits about you; to take all the orders, reserve tables, you need a head! I've heard it said that it's even more terrible than writing plays and books." We had almost reached my landing when the lift-boy carried me down again to the ground floor because he found that the button was not working properly, and in a moment had put it right. I told him that I preferred to walk upstairs, by which I meant, without putting it in so many words, that I preferred not to catch whooping-cough. But with a cordial and contagious burst of coughing the boy thrust me back into the lift. "There's no danger now, I've fixed the button." Seeing that he was not ceasing to talk, preferring to learn the name of my visitor and the message that he had left, rather than the comparative beauties of Balbec, Paris and Monte-Carlo, I said to him (as one might say to a tenor who is wearying one with Benjamin Godard, "Won't you sing me some Debussy?") "But who is the person that called to see me?" "It's the gentleman you went out with yesterday. I am going to fetch his card,

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

it's with my porter." As, the day before, I had dropped Robert de Saint-Loup at Doncières station before going to meet Albertine, I supposed that the lift-boy was referring to him, but it was the chauffeur. And by describing him in the words: "The gentleman you went out with," he taught me at the same time that a working man is just as much a gentleman as a man about town. A lesson in the use of words only. For in point of fact I had never made any distinction between the classes. And if I had felt, on hearing a chauffeur called a gentleman, the same astonishment as Comte X who had only held that rank for a week and whom, by saying: "the Comtesse looks tired," I made turn his head round to see who it was that I meant, it was simply because I was not familiar with that use of the word; I had never made any difference between working men, professional men and noblemen, and I should have been equally ready to make any of them my friends. With a certain preference for the working men, and after them for the noblemen, not because I liked them better, but because I knew that one could expect greater courtesy from them towards the working men than one finds among professional men, whether because the great nobleman does not despise the working man as the professional man does or else because they are naturally polite to anybody, as beautiful women are glad to bestow a smile which they know to be so joyfully received. I cannot however pretend that this habit that I had of putting people of humble station on a level with people in society, even if it was quite understood by the latter, was always entirely satisfactory to my mother. Not that, humanly speaking, she made any difference between one person and another, and if Fran-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

goise was ever in sorrow or in pain she was comforted and tended by Mamma with the same devotion as her best friend. But my mother was too much my grandmother's daughter not to accept, in social matters, the rule of caste. People at Combray might have kind hearts, sensitive natures, might have adopted the most perfect theories of human equality, my mother, when a footman became emancipated, began to say "you" and slipped out of the habit of addressing me in the third person, was moved by these presumptions to the same wrath that breaks out in Saint-Simon's *Memoirs*, whenever a nobleman who is not entitled to it seizes a pretext for assuming the style of "Highness" in an official document, or for not paying dukes the deference he owes to them and is gradually beginning to lay aside. There was a "Combray spirit" so refractory that it will require centuries of good nature (my mother's was boundless), of theories of equality, to succeed in dissolving it. I cannot swear that in my mother certain particles of this spirit had not remained insoluble. She would have been as reluctant to give her hand to a footman as she would have been ready to give him ten francs (which for that matter he was far more glad to receive). To her, whether she admitted it or not, masters were masters, and servants were the people who fed in the kitchen. When she saw the driver of a motor-car dining with me in the restaurant, she was not altogether pleased, and said to me: "It seems to me you might have a more suitable friend than a mechanic," as she might have said, had it been a question of my marriage: "You might find somebody better than that." This particular chauffeur (fortunately I never dreamed of inviting him to dinner) had come to tell me that the

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

motor-car company which had sent him to Balbec for the season had ordered him to return to Paris on the following day. This excuse, especially as the chauffeur was charming and expressed himself so simply that one would always have taken anything he said for Gospel, seemed to us to be most probably true. It was only half so. There was as a matter of fact no more work for him at Balbec. And in any case, the Company being only half convinced of the veracity of the young Evangelist, bowed over the consecration cross of his steering-wheel, was anxious that he should return as soon as possible to Paris. And indeed if the young Apostle wrought a miracle in multiplying his mileage when he was calculating it for M. de Charlus, when on the other hand it was a matter of rendering his account to the Company, he divided what he had earned by six. In consequence of which the Company, coming to the conclusion either that nobody wanted a car now at Balbec, which, so late in the season, was quite probable, or that it was being robbed, decided that, upon either hypothesis, the best thing was to recall him to Paris, not that there was very much work for him there. What the chauffeur wished was to avoid, if possible, the dead season. I have said—though I was unaware of this at the time, when the knowledge of it would have saved me much annoyance—that he was on intimate terms (without their ever shewing any sign of acquaintance before other people) with Morel. Starting from the day on which he was ordered back, before he realised that there was still a way out of going, we were obliged to content ourselves for our excursions with hiring a carriage, or sometimes, as an amusement for Albertine and because she was fond of riding, a pair of saddle-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

horses. The carriages were unsatisfactory. "What a rattle-trap," Albertine would say. I would often, as it happened, have preferred to be driving by myself. Without being ready to fix a date, I longed to put an end to this existence which I blamed for making me renounce not so much work as pleasure. It would happen also, however, that the habits which bound me were suddenly abolished, generally when some former self, full of the desire to live a merry life, took the place of what was my self at the moment. I felt this longing to escape especially strong one day when, having left Albertine at her aunt's, I had gone on horseback to call on the Verdurins and had taken an unfrequented path through the woods the beauty of which they had extolled to me. Clinging to the outline of the cliffs, it alternately climbed and then, hemmed in by dense woods on either side, dived into savage gorges. For a moment the barren rocks by which I was surrounded, the sea visible in their jagged intervals, swam before my eyes, like fragments of another universe: I had recognised the mountainous and marine landscape which Elstir had made the scene of those two admirable water colours: "Poet meeting a Muse," "Young Man meeting a Centaur" which I had seen at the Duchesse de Guermantes's. The thought of them transported the place in which I was so far beyond the world of to-day that I should not have been surprised if, like the young man of the prehistoric age that Elstir painted, I had in the course of my ride come upon a mythological personage. Suddenly, my horse gave a start; he had heard a strange sound; it was all I could do to hold him and remain in the saddle, then I raised in the direction from which the sound seemed to come my eyes filled with tears

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

and saw, not two hundred feet above my head, against the sun, between two great wings of flashing metal which were carrying him on, a creature whose barely visible face appeared to me to resemble that of a man. I was as deeply moved as a Greek upon seeing for the first time a demi-god. I cried also, for I was ready to cry the moment I realised that the sound came from above my head—aeroplanes were still rare in those days—at the thought that what I was going to see for the first time was an aeroplane. Then, just as when in a newspaper one feels that one is coming to a moving passage, the mere sight of the machine was enough to make me burst into tears. Meanwhile the airman seemed to be uncertain of his course; I felt that there lay open before him—before me, had not habit made me a prisoner—all the routes in space, in life itself; he flew on, let himself glide for a few moments, over the sea, then quickly making up his mind, seeming to yield to some attraction the reverse of gravity, as though returning to his native element, with a slight movement of his golden wings, rose sheer into the sky.

To come back to the mechanic, he demanded of Morel that the Verdurins should not merely replace their break by a motor-car (which, granted their generosity towards the faithful, was comparatively easy), but, what was less easy, replace their head coachman, the sensitive young man who was inclined to dark thoughts, by himself, the chauffeur. This change was carried out in a few days by the following device. Morel had begun by seeing that the coachman was robbed of everything that he needed for the carriage. One day it was the bit that was missing, another day the curb. At other times it was the cushion

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

of his box-seat that had vanished, or his whip, his rug, his hammer, sponge, chamois-leather. But he always managed to borrow what he required from a neighbour; only he was late in bringing round the carriage, which put him in M. Verdurin's bad books and plunged him in a state of melancholy and dark thoughts. The chauffeur, who was in a hurry to take his place, told Morel that he would have to return to Paris. It was time to do something desperate. Morel persuaded M. Verdurin's servants that the young coachman had declared that he would set a trap for the lot of them, boasting that he could take on all six of them at once, and assured them that they could not overlook such an insult. He himself could not take any part in the quarrel, but he warned them so that they might be on their guard. It was arranged that while M. and Mme. Verdurin and their guests were out walking the servants should fall upon the young man in the coach house. I may mention, although it was only the pretext for what was bound to happen, but because the people concerned interested me later on, that the Verdurins had a friend staying with them that day whom they had promised to take for a walk before his departure, which was fixed for that same evening.

What surprised me greatly when we started off for our walk was that Morel, who was coming with us, and was to play his violin under the trees, said to me: "Listen, I have a sore arm, I don't want to say anything about it to Mme. Verdurin, but you might ask her to send for one of her footmen, Howsler for instance, he can carry my things." "I think you ought to suggest some one else," I replied. "He will be wanted here for dinner." A

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

look of anger passed over Morel's face. "No, I'm not going to trust my violin to any Tom, Dick or Harry." I realised later on his reason for this selection. Howsler was the beloved brother of the young coachman, and, if he had been left at home, might have gone to his rescue. During our walk, dropping his voice so that the elder Howsler should not overhear: "What a good fellow he is," said Morel. "So is his brother, for that matter. If he hadn't that fatal habit of drinking. . . ." "Did you say drinking?" said Mme. Verdurin, turning pale at the idea of having a coachman who drank. "You've never noticed it. I always say to myself it's a miracle that he's never had an accident while he's been driving you." "Does he drive anyone else, then?" "You can easily see how many spills he's had, his face to-day is a mass of bruises. I don't know how he's escaped being killed, he's broken his shafts." "I haven't seen him to-day," said Mme. Verdurin, trembling at the thought of what might have happened to her, "you appal me." She tried to cut short the walk so as to return at once, but Morel chose an aria by Bach with endless variations to keep her away from the house. As soon as we got back she went to the stable, saw the new shaft and Howsler streaming with blood. She was on the point of telling him, without making any comment on what she had seen, that she did not require a coachman any longer, and of paying him his wages, but of his own accord, not wishing to accuse his fellow-servants; to whose animosity he attributed retrospectively the theft of all his saddlery, and seeing that further patience would only end in his being left for dead on the ground, he asked leave to go at once, which made everything quite simple. The chauff-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

feur began his duties next day and, later on, Mme. Verdurin (who had been obliged to engage another) was so well satisfied with him that she recommended him to me warmly, as a man on whom I might rely. I, knowing nothing of all this, used to engage him by the day in Paris, but I am anticipating events, I shall come to all this when I reach the story of Albertine. At the present moment we are at la Raspelière, where I have just been dining for the first time with my mistress, and M. de Charlus with Morel, the reputed son of an "Agent" who drew a fixed salary of thirty thousand francs annually, kept his carriage, and had any number of majordomos, subordinates, gardeners, bailiffs and farmers at his beck and call. But, since I have so far anticipated, I do not wish to leave the reader under the impression that Morel was entirely wicked. He was, rather, a mass of contradictions, capable on certain days of being genuinely kind.

I was naturally greatly surprised to hear that the coachman had been dismissed, and even more surprised when I recognised his successor as the chauffeur who had been taking Albertine and myself in his car. But he poured out a complicated story, according to which he had thought that he was summoned back to Paris, where an order had come for him to go to the Verdurins, and I did not doubt his word for an instant. The coachman's dismissal was the cause of Morel's talking to me for a few minutes, to express his regret at the departure of that worthy fellow. However, even apart from the moments when I was alone, and he literally bounded towards me beaming with joy, Morel, seeing that everybody made much of me at la Raspelière and feeling that he was deliberately cutting himself off from the society

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

of a person who could in no way imperil him, since he had made me burn my boats and had destroyed all possibility of my treating him with an air of patronage (which I had never, for that matter, dreamed of adopting), ceased to hold aloof from me. I attributed his change of attitude to the influence of M. de Charlus, which as a matter of fact did make him in certain respects less limited, more of an artist, but in others, when he interpreted literally the eloquent, insincere, and moreover transient formulas of his master, made him stupider than ever. That M. de Charlus might have said something to him was as a matter of fact the only thing that occurred to me. How was I to have guessed then what I was told afterwards (and have never been certain of its truth, Andrée's assertions as to everything that concerned Albertine, especially later on, having always seemed to me to be statements to be received with caution, for, as we have already seen, she was not genuinely fond of my mistress and was jealous of her), a thing which in any event, even if it was true, was remarkably well concealed from me by both of them: that Albertine was on the best of terms with Morel? The novel attitude which, about the time of the coachman's dismissal, Morel adopted with regard to myself, enabled me to change my opinion of him. I retained the ugly impression of his character which had been suggested by the servility which this young man had shewn me when he needed my services, followed, as soon as the service had been rendered, by a scornful aloofness as though he did not even see me. I still lacked evidence of his venal relations with M. de Charlus, and also of his bestial and purposeless instincts, the non-gratification of which (when it occurred) or the complications that they in-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

voiced, were the cause of his sorrows; but his character was not so uniformly vile and was full of contradictions. He resembled an old book of the middle ages, full of mistakes, of absurd traditions, of obscenities; he was extraordinarily composite. I had supposed at first that his art, in which he was really a past-master, had given him superiorities that went beyond the virtuosity of the mere performer. Once when I spoke of my wish to start work "Work, become famous," he said to me. "Who said that?" I inquired. "Fontanes, to Chateaubriand." He also knew certain love letters of Napoleon. Good, I thought to myself, he reads. But this phrase which he had read I know not where was doubtless the only one that he knew in the whole of ancient or modern literature, for he repeated it to me every evening. Another which he quoted even more frequently to prevent me from breathing a word about him to anybody, was the following, which he considered equally literary, whereas it is barely grammatical, or at any rate makes no kind of sense, except perhaps to a mystery-loving servant: "Beware of the wary." As a matter of fact, if one cast back from this stupid maxim to what Fontanes had said to Chateaubriand, one explored a whole side, varied but less contradictory than one might suppose, of Morel's character. This youth who, provided there was money to be made by it, would have done anything in the world, and without remorse—perhaps not without an odd sort of vexation, amounting to nervous excitement, to which however the name remorse could not for a moment be applied—who would, had it been to his advantage, have plunged in distress, not to say mourning, whole families, this youth who set money above everything, above, not

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

to speak of unselfish kindness, the most natural sentiments of common humanity, this same youth nevertheless set above money his certificate as first prize-winner at the Conservatoire and the risk of there being anything said to his discredit in the flute or counterpoint class. And so his most violent rages, his most sombre and unjustifiable fits of ill-temper arose from what he himself (generalising doubtless from certain particular cases in which he had met with spiteful people) called universal treachery. He flattered himself that he escaped from this fault by never speaking about anyone, by concealing his tactics, by distrusting everybody. (Alas for me, in view of what was to happen after my return to Paris, his distrust had not "held" in the case of the Balbec chauffeur, in whom he had doubtless recognised a peer, that is to say, in contradiction of his maxim, a wary person in the good sense of the word, a wary person who remains obstinately silent before honest folk and at once comes to an understanding with a blackguard.) It seemed to him—and he was not absolutely wrong—that his distrust would enable him always to save his bacon, to slip unscathed out of the most perilous adventures, without anyone's being able not indeed to prove but even to suggest anything against him, in the institution in the Rue Bergère. He would work, become famous, would perhaps be one day, with his respectability still intact, examiner in the violin on the Board of that great and glorious Conservatoire.

But it is perhaps crediting Morel's brain with too much logic to attempt to discriminate between these contradictions. As a matter of fact his nature was just like a sheet of paper that has been folded so often in every direction that it is impossible to straighten it out.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

He seemed to act upon quite lofty principles, and in a magnificent hand, marred by the most elementary mistakes in spelling, spent hours writing to his brother that he had behaved badly to his sisters, that he was their elder, their natural support, etc., and to his sisters that they had shewn a want of respect for himself.

Presently, as summer came to an end, when one got out of the train at Douville, the sun dimmed by the prevailing mist had ceased to be anything more in a sky that was uniformly mauve than a lump of redness. To the great peace which descends at nightfall over these tufted saltmarshes, and had tempted a number of Parisians, painters mostly, to spend their holidays at Douville, was added a moisture which made them seek shelter early in their little bungalows. In several of these the lamp was already lighted. Only a few cows remained out of doors gazing at the sea and lowing, while others, more interested in humanity, turned their attention towards our carriages. A single painter who had set up his easel where the ground rose slightly was striving to render that great calm, that hushed luminosity. Perhaps the cattle were going to serve him unconsciously and kindly as models, for their contemplative air and their solitary presence when the human beings had withdrawn, contributed in their own way to enhance the strong impression of repose that evening conveys. And, a few weeks later, the transposition was no less agreeable when, as autumn advanced, the days became really short, and we were obliged to make our journey in the dark. If I had been out anywhere in the afternoon, I had to go back to change my clothes, at the latest, by five o'clock, when at this season the round, red sun had already sunk half way down the slanting sheet

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

of glass, which formerly I had detested, and, like a Greek fire, was inflaming the sea in the glass fronts of all my book-cases. Some wizard's gesture having revived, as I put on my dinner-jacket, the alert and frivolous self that was mine when I used to go with Saint-Loup to dine at Rivebelle and on the evening when I looked forward to taking Mme. de Stermaria to dine on the island in the Bois, I began unconsciously to hum the same tune that I had hummed then; and it was only when I realised this that by the song I recognised the resurrected singer, who indeed knew no other tune. The first time that I sang it, I was beginning to be in love with Albertine, but I imagined that I would never get to know her. Later on, in Paris, it was when I had ceased to be in love with her and some days after I had enjoyed her for the first time. Now it was when I was in love with her again and on the point of going out to dinner with her, to the great regret of the manager who supposed that I would end by staying at la Raspelière altogether and deserting his hotel, and assured me that he had heard that fever was prevalent in that neighbourhood, due to the marshes of the Bac and their "stagnous" water. I was delighted by the multiplicity in which I saw my life thus spread over three planes; and besides, when one becomes for an instant one's former self, that is to say different from what one has been for some time past, one's sensibility, being no longer dulled by habit, receives the slightest shocks of those vivid impressions which make everything that has preceded them fade into significance, and to which, because of their intensity, we attach ourselves with the momentary enthusiasm of a drunken man. It was already night when we got into the omnibus or carriage

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

which was to take us to the station where we would find the little train. And in the hall the chief magistrate was saying to us: "Ah! You are going to la Raspelière! Sapristi, she has a nerve, your Mme. Verdurin, to make you travel an hour by train in the dark, simply to dine with her. And then to start off again at ten o'clock at night, with a wind blowing like the very devil. It is easy to see that you have nothing else to do," he added, rubbing his hands together. No doubt he spoke thus from annoyance at not having been invited, and also from the satisfaction that people feel who are "busy"—though it be with the most idiotic occupation—at "not having time" to do what you are doing.

Certainly it is only right that the man who draws up reports, adds up figures, answers business letters, follows the movements of the stock exchange, should feel when he says to you with a sneer: "It's all very well for you; you have nothing better to do," an agreeable sense of his own superiority. But this would be no less contemptuous, would be even more so (for dining out is a thing that the busy man does also) were your recreation writing *Hamlet* or merely reading it. Wherein busy men shew a want of reflexion. For the disinterested culture which seems to them a comic pastime of idle people at the moment when they find them engaged in it is, they ought to remember, the same that in their own profession brings to the fore men who may not be better magistrates or administrators than themselves but before whose rapid advancement they bow their heads, saying: "It appears he's a great reader, a most distinguished individual." But above all the chief magistrate did not take into account that what pleased me about these dinners at la

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

Raspelière was that, as he himself said quite rightly, though as a criticism, they "meant a regular journey," a journey whose charm appeared to me all the more thrilling in that it was not an object in itself, and no one made any attempt to find pleasure in it—that being reserved for the party for which we were bound, and greatly modified by all the atmosphere that surrounded it. It was already night now when I exchanged the warmth of the hotel—the hotel that had become my home—for the railway carriage into which I climbed with Albertine, in which a glimmer of lamplight on the window shewed, at certain halts of the panting little train, that we had arrived at a station. So that there should be no risk of Cottard's missing us, and not having heard the name of the station, I opened the door, but what burst headlong into the carriage was not any of the faithful, but the wind, the rain, the cold. In the darkness I could make out fields, I could hear the sea, we were in the open country. Albertine, before we were engulfed in the little nucleus, examined herself in a little mirror, extracted from a gold bag which she carried about with her. The fact was that on our first visit, Mme. Verdurin having taken her upstairs to her dressing-room so that she might make herself tidy before dinner, I had felt, amid the profound calm in which I had been living for some time, a slight stir of uneasiness and jealousy at being obliged to part from Albertine at the foot of the stair, and had become so anxious while I was by myself in the drawing-room, among the little clan, and asking myself what my mistress could be doing, that I had sent a telegram the next day, after finding out from M. de Charlus what the correct thing was at the moment, to

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

order from Cartier's a bag which was the joy of Albertine's life and also of mine. It was for me a guarantee of peace of mind, and also of my mistress's solicitude. For she had evidently seen that I did not like her to be parted from me at Mme. Verdurin's and arranged to make in the train all the toilet that was necessary before dinner.

Included in the number of Mme. Verdurin's regular frequenters, and reckoned the most faithful of them all, had been, for some months now, M. de Charlus. Regularly, thrice weekly, the passengers who were sitting in the waiting-rooms or standing upon the platform at Doncières-Ouest used to see that stout gentleman go past with his grey hair, his black moustaches, his lips reddened with a salve less noticeable at the end of the season than in summer when the daylight made it more crude and the heat used to melt it. As he made his way towards the little train, he could not refrain (simply from force of habit, as a connoisseur, since he now had a sentiment which kept him chaste, or at least, for most of the time, faithful) from casting at the labourers, soldiers, young men in tennis flannels, a furtive glance at once inquisitorial and timorous, after which he immediately let his eyelids droop over his half-shut eyes with the unction of an ecclesiastic engaged in telling his beads, with the modesty of a bride vowed to the one love of her life or of a well brought up girl. The faithful were all the more convinced that he had not seen them, since he got into a different compartment from theirs (as, often enough, did Princess Sherbatoff also), like a man who does not know whether people will be pleased or not to be seen with him and leaves them the option of coming and joining him if

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

they choose. This option had not been taken, at first, by the Doctor, who had asked us to leave him by himself in his compartment. Making a virtue of his natural hesitation now that he occupied a great position in the medical world, it was with a smile, throwing back his head, looking at Ski over his glasses, that he said, either from malice or in the hope of eliciting the opinion of the "comrades": "You can understand that if I was by myself, a bachelor, but for my wife's sake I ask myself whether I ought to allow him to travel with us after what you have told me," the Doctor whispered. "What's that you're saying?" asked Mme. Cottard. "Nothing, it doesn't concern you, it's not meant for ladies to hear," the Doctor replied with a wink, and with a majestic self-satisfaction which held the balance between the dryly malicious air he adopted before his pupils and patients and the uneasiness that used in the past to accompany his shafts of wit at the Verdurins', and went on talking in a lowered tone. Mme. Cottard could make out only the words "one of the brotherhood" and "*tapette*," and as in the Doctor's vocabulary the former expression denoted the Jewish race and the latter a wagging tongue, Mme. Cottard concluded that M. de Charlus must be a garrulous Israelite. She could not understand why people should keep aloof from the Baron for that reason, felt it her duty as the senior lady of the clan to insist that he should not be left alone, and so we proceeded in a body to M. de Charlus's compartment, led by Cottard who was still perplexed. From the corner in which he was reading a volume of Balzac, M. de Charlus observed this hesitation; and yet he had not raised his eyes. But just as deaf-mutes detect, from a movement of the air imperceptible to other people, that

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

some one is standing behind them, so he had, to warn him of other people's coldness towards him, a positive hyperaesthesia. This had, as it habitually does in every sphere, developed in M. de Charlus imaginary sufferings. Like those neuropaths who, feeling a slight lowering of the temperature, induce from this that there must be a window open on the floor above, become violently excited and start sneezing, M. de Charlus, if a person appeared preoccupied in his presence, concluded that somebody had repeated to that person a remark that he had made about him. But there was no need even for the other person to have a distracted, or a sombre, or a smiling air, he would invent them. On the other hand, cordiality completely concealed from him the slanders of which he had not heard. Having begun by detecting Cottard's hesitation, if, greatly to the surprise of the faithful who did not suppose that their presence had yet been observed by the reader's lowered gaze, he held out his hand to them when they were at a convenient distance, he contented himself with a forward inclination of his whole person which he quickly drew back for Cottard, without taking in his own gloved hand the hand which the Doctor had held out to him. "We felt we simply must come and keep you company, Sir, and not leave you alone like that in your little corner. It is a great pleasure to us," Mme. Cottard began in a friendly tone to the Baron. "I am greatly honoured," the Baron intoned, bowing coldly. "I was so pleased to hear that you have definitely chosen this neighbourhood to set up your taber. . . ." She was going to say "tabernacle" but it occurred to her that the word was Hebraic and discourteous to a Jew who might see an allusion in it. And so she paused for a moment to

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

choose another of the expressions that were familiar to her, that is to say a consecrated expression: "to set up, I should say, your *penates*." (It is true that these deities do not appertain to the Christian religion either, but to one which has been dead for so long that it no longer claims any devotees whose feelings one need be afraid of hurting.) "We, unfortunately, what with term beginning, and the Doctor's hospital duties, can never choose our domicile for very long in one place." And glancing at a cardboard box: "You see too how we poor women are less fortunate than the sterner sex, to go only such a short distance as to our friends the Verdurins', we are obliged to take a whole heap of impedimenta." I meanwhile was examining the Baron's volume of Balzac. It was not a paper-covered copy, picked up on a bookstall, like the volume of Bergotte which he had lent me at our first meeting. It was a book from his own library, and as such bore the device: "I belong to the Baron de Charlus," for which was substituted at times, to shew the studious tastes of the Guermantes: "In proeliis non semper," or yet another motto: "Non sine labore." But we shall see these presently replaced by others, in an attempt to please Morel. Mme. Cottard, a little later, hit upon a subject which she felt to be of more personal interest to the Baron. "I don't know whether you agree with me, Sir," she said to him presently, "but I hold very broad views, and, to my mind, there is a great deal of good in all religions. I am not one of the people who get hydrophobia at the sight of a . . . Protestant." "I was taught that mine is the true religion," replied M. de Charlus. "He's a fanatic," thought Mme. Cottard, "Swann, until recently, was more tolerant; it is true that

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

he was a converted one." Now, so far from this being the case, the Baron was not only a Christian, as we know, but pious with a mediaeval fervour. To him as to the sculptors of the middle ages, the Christian church was, in the living sense of the word, peopled with a swarm of beings, whom he believed to be entirely real, Prophets, Apostles, Angels, holy personages of every sort, surrounding the Incarnate Word, His Mother and Her Spouse, the Eternal Father, all the Martyrs and Doctors of the Church, as they may be seen carved in high relief, thronging the porches or lining the naves of the cathedrals. Out of all these M. de Charlus had chosen as his patrons and intercessors the Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, to whom he made frequent appeals that they would convey his prayers to the Eternal Father, about Whose Throne they stand. And so Mme. Cottard's mistake amused me greatly.

To leave the religious sphere, let us mention that the Doctor, who had come to Paris meagrely equipped with the counsels of a peasant mother, and had then been absorbed in the almost purely materialistic studies to which those who seek to advance in a medical career are obliged to devote themselves for a great many years, had never become cultured, had acquired increasing authority but never any experience, took the word "honoured" in its literal meaning and was at once flattered by it because he was vain and distressed because he had a kind heart. "That poor de Charlus," he said to his wife that evening, "made me feel sorry for him when he said he was honoured by travelling with us. One feels, poor devil, that he knows nobody, that he has to humble himself."

But presently, without any need to be guided by the

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

charitable Mme. Cottard, the faithful had succeeded in overcoming the qualms which they had all more or less felt at first, on finding themselves in the company of M. de Charlus. No doubt in his presence they were incessantly reminded of Ski's revelations, and conscious of the sexual abnormality embodied in their travelling companion. But this abnormality itself had a sort of attraction for them. It gave for them to the Baron's conversation, remarkable in itself but in ways which they could scarcely appreciate, a savour which made the most interesting conversation, that of Brichot himself, appear slightly insipid in comparison. From the very outset, moreover, they had been pleased to admit that he was intelligent. "The genius that is perhaps akin to madness," the Doctor declaimed, and albeit the Princess, athirst for knowledge, insisted, said not another word, this axiom being all that he knew about genius and seeming to him less supported by proof than our knowledge of typhoid fever and arthritis. And as he had become proud and remained ill-bred: "No questions, Princess, do not interrogate me, I am at the seaside for a rest. Besides, you would not understand, you know nothing about medicine." And the Princess held her peace with apologies, deciding that Cottard was a charming man and realising that celebrities were not always approachable. In this initial period, then, they had ended by finding M. de Charlus an agreeable person notwithstanding his vice (or what is generally so named). Now it was, quite unconsciously, because of that vice that they found him more intelligent than the rest. The most simple maxims to which, adroitly provoked by the sculptor or the don, M. de Charlus gave utterance concerning love, jealousy,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

beauty, in view of the experience, strange, secret, refined and monstrous, upon which he founded them, assumed for the faithful that charm of unfamiliarity with which a psychology analogous to that which our own dramatic literature has always offered us bedecks itself in a Russian or Japanese play performed by native actors. One might still venture, when he was not listening, upon a malicious witticism at his expense. "Oh!" whispered the sculptor, seeing a young railwayman with the sweeping eyelashes of a dancing girl at whom M. de Charlus could not help staring, "if the Baron begins making eyes at the conductor, we shall never get there, the train will start going backwards. Just look at the way he's staring at him, this is not a steam-tram we're on, it's a funicular." But when all was said, if M. de Charlus did not appear, it was almost a disappointment to be travelling only with people who were just like everybody else, and not to have by one's side this painted, paunchy, tightly-buttoned personage, reminding one of a box of exotic and dubious origin from which escapes the curious odour of fruits the mere thought of tasting which stirs the heart. From this point of view, the faithful of the masculine sex enjoyed a keener satisfaction in the short stage of the journey between Saint-Martin du Chêne, where M. de Charlus got in, and Doncières, the station at which Morel joined the party. For so long as the violinist was not there (and provided the ladies and Albertine, keeping to themselves so as not to disturb our conversation, were out of hearing), M. de Charlus made no attempt to appear to be avoiding certain subjects and did not hesitate to speak of "what it is customary to call degenerate morals." Albertine could not hamper him, for she was

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

always with the ladies, like a well-bred girl who does not wish her presence to restrict the freedom of grown-up conversation. And I was quite resigned to not having her by my side, on condition however that she remained in the same carriage. For I, who no longer felt any jealousy and scarcely any love for her, never thought of what she might be doing on the days when I did not see her; on the other hand, when I was there, a mere partition which might at a pinch be concealing a betrayal was intolerable to me, and if she retired with the ladies to the next compartment, a moment later, unable to remain in my seat any longer, at the risk of offending whoever might be talking, Brichot, Cottard or Charlus, to whom I could not explain the reason for my flight, I would rise, leave them without ceremony, and, to make certain that nothing abnormal was going on, walk down the corridor. And, till we came to Doncières, M. de Charlus, without any fear of shocking his audience, would speak sometimes in the plainest terms of morals which, he declared, for his own part he did not consider either good or evil. He did this from cunning, to shew his breadth of mind, convinced as he was that his own morals aroused no suspicion in the minds of the faithful. He was well aware that there did exist in the world several persons who were, to use an expression which became habitual with him later on, "in the know" about himself. But he imagined that these persons were not more than three or four, and that none of them was at that moment upon the coast of Normandy. This illusion may appear surprising in so shrewd, so suspicious a man. Even in the case of those whom he believed to be more or less well informed, he flattered himself that their information was all quite

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

vague, and hoped, by telling them this or that fact about anyone, to clear the person in question from all suspicion on the part of a listener who out of politeness pretended to accept his statements. Indeed, being uncertain as to what I might know or guess about him, he supposed that my opinion, which he imagined to be of far longer standing than it actually was, was quite general, and that it was sufficient for him to deny this or that detail to be believed, whereas on the contrary, if our knowledge of the whole always precedes our knowledge of details, it makes our investigation of the latter infinitely easier and having destroyed his cloak of invisibility no longer allows the pretender to conceal what he wishes to keep secret. Certainly when M. de Charlus, invited to a dinner-party by one of the faithful or of their friends, took the most complicated precautions to introduce among the names of ten people whom he mentioned that of Morel, he never imagined that for the reasons, always different, which he gave for the pleasure or convenience which he would find that evening in being invited to meet him, his hosts, while appearing to believe him implicitly, substituted a single reason, always the same, of which he supposed them to be ignorant, namely that he was in love with him. Similarly, Mme. Verdurin, seeming always entirely to admit the motives, half artistic, half charitable, with which M. de Charlus accounted to her for the interest that he took in Morel, never ceased to thank the Baron with emotion for his kindness—his touching kindness, she called it—to the violinist. And how astonished M. de Charlus would have been, if, one day when Morel and he were delayed and had not come by the train, he had heard the Mistress say: "We're all here now except the young ladies." The

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

Baron would have been all the more stupefied in that, going hardly anywhere save to la Raspelière, he played the part there of a family chaplain, like the abbé in a stock company, and would sometimes (when Morel had 48 hours' leave) sleep there for two nights in succession. Mme. Verdurin would then give them communicating rooms and, to put them at their ease, would say: "If you want to have a little music, don't worry about us, the walls are as thick as a fortress, you have nobody else on your floor, and my husband sleeps like lead." On such days M. de Charlus would relieve the Princess of the duty of going to meet strangers at the station, apologise for Mme. Verdurin's absence on the grounds of a state of health which he described so vividly that the guests entered the drawing-room with solemn faces, and uttered cries of astonishment on finding the Mistress up and doing and wearing what was almost a low dress.

For M. de Charlus had for the moment become for Mme. Verdurin the faithfulest of the faithful, a second Princess Sherbatoff. Of his position in society she was not nearly so certain as of that of the Princess, imagining that if the latter cared to see no one outside the little nucleus it was out of contempt for other people and preference for it. As this pretence was precisely the Verdurin's own, they treating as bores everyone to whose society they were not admitted, it is incredible that the Mistress can have believed the Princess to possess a heart of steel, detesting what was fashionable. But she stuck to her guns, and was convinced that in the case of the great lady also it was in all sincerity and from a love of things intellectual that she avoided the company of bores. The latter were, as it happened, diminishing in numbers

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

from the Verdurins' point of view. Life by the seaside robbed an introduction of the ulterior consequences which might be feared in Paris. Brilliant men who had come down to Balbec without their wives (which made everything much easier) made overtures to la Raspelière and, from being bores, became too charming. This was the case with the Prince de Guermantes, whom the absence of his Princess would not, however, have decided to go "as a bachelor" to the Verdurins', had not the lodestone of Dreyfusism been so powerful as to carry him in one stride up the steep ascent to la Raspelière, unfortunately upon a day when the Mistress was not at home. Mme. Verdurin as it happened was not certain that he and M. de Charlus moved in the same world. The Baron had indeed said that the Duc de Guermantes was his brother, but this was perhaps the untruthful boast of an adventurer. Man of the world as he had shewn himself to be, so friendly, so "faithful" to the Verdurins, the Mistress still almost hesitated to invite him to meet the Prince de Guermantes. She consulted Ski and Brichot: "The Baron and the Prince de Guermantes, will they be all right together?" "Good gracious, Madame, as to one of the two I think I can safely say." "What good is that to me?" Mme. Verdurin had retorted crossly. "I asked you whether they would mix well together." "Ah! Madame, that is one of the things that it is hard to tell." Mme. Verdurin had been impelled by no malice. She was certain of the Baron's morals, but when she expressed herself in these terms had not been thinking about them for a moment, but had merely wished to know whether she could invite the Prince and M. de Charlus on the same evening, without their clashing. She had no male-

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

volent intention when she employed these ready-made expressions which are popular in artistic "little clans." To make the most of M. de Guermantes, she proposed to take him in the afternoon, after her luncheon-party, to a charity entertainment at which sailors from the neighbourhood would give a representation of a ship setting sail. But, not having time to attend to everything, she delegated her duties to the faithfulest of the faithful, the Baron. "You understand, I don't want them to hang about like mussels on a rock, they must keep moving, we must see them weighing anchor, or whatever it's called. Now you are always going down to the harbour at Balbec-Plage, you can easily arrange a dress rehearsal without tiring yourself. You must know far more than I do, M. de Charlus, about getting hold of sailors. But after all, we're giving ourselves a great deal of trouble for M. de Guermantes. Perhaps he's only one of those idiots from the Jockey Club. Oh! Heavens, I'm running down the Jockey Club, and I seem to remember that you're one of them. Eh, Baron, you don't answer me, are you one of them? You don't care to come out with us? Look, here is a book that has just come, I think you'll find it interesting. It is by Roujon. The title is attractive: "*Life among men.*"

For my part, I was all the more glad that M. de Charlus often took the place of Princess Sherbatoff, inasmuch as I was thoroughly in her bad books, for a reason that was at once trivial and profound. One day when I was in the little train, paying every attention, as was my habit, to Princess Sherbatoff, I saw Mme. de Villeparisis get in. She had as a matter of fact come down to spend some weeks with the Princesse de Luxembourg, but,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

chained to the daily necessity of seeing Albertine, I had never replied to the repeated invitations of the Marquise and her royal hostess. I felt remorse at the sight of my grandmother's friend, and, purely from a sense of duty (without deserting Princess Sherbatoff), sat talking to her for some time. I was, as it happened, entirely unaware that Mme. de Villeparisis knew quite well who my companion was but did not wish to speak to her. At the next station, Mme. de Villeparisis left the carriage, indeed I reproached myself with not having helped her on to the platform; I resumed my seat by the side of the Princess. But one would have thought—a cataclysm frequent among people whose position is far from stable and who are afraid that one may have heard something to their discredit, and may be looking down upon them—that the curtain had risen upon a fresh scene. Buried in her *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Madame Sherbatoff barely moved her lips in reply to my questions and finally told me that I was making her head ache. I had not the faintest idea of the nature of my crime. When I bade the Princess good-bye, the customary smile did not light up her face, her chin drooped in a dry acknowledgment, she did not even offer me her hand, nor did she ever speak to me again. But she must have spoken—though what she said I cannot tell—to the Verdurins; for as soon as I asked them whether I ought not to say something polite to Princess Sherbatoff, they replied in chorus: “No! No! No! Nothing of the sort! She does not care for polite speeches!” They did not say this to effect a breach between us, but she had succeeded in making them believe that she was unmoved by civilities, that hers was a spirit unassailed by the vanities of this world.

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

One needs to have seen the politician who was reckoned the most single-minded, the most uncompromising, the most unapproachable, so long as he was in office, one must have seen him in the hour of his disgrace, humbly soliciting, with a bright, affectionate smile, the haughty greeting of some unimportant journalist, one must have seen Cottard (whom his new patients regarded as a rod of iron) draw himself erect, one must know out of what disappointments in love, what rebuffs to snobbery were built up the apparent pride, the universally acknowledged anti-snobbery of Princess Sherbatoff, in order to grasp that among the human race the rule—which admits of exceptions, naturally—is that the reputedly hard people are weak people whom nobody wants, and that the strong, caring little whether they are wanted or not, have alone that meekness which the common herd mistake for weakness.

However, I ought not to judge Princess Sherbatoff severely. Her case is so common! One day, at the funeral of a Guermantes, a distinguished man who was standing next to me drew my attention to a slim person with handsome features. "Of all the Guermantes," my neighbour informed me, "that is the most astonishing, the most singular. He is the Duke's brother." I replied imprudently that he was mistaken, that the gentleman in question, who was in no way related to the Guermantes, was named Journier-Sarlovèze. The distinguished man turned his back upon me, and has never even bowed to me since.

A great musician, a member of the Institute, occupying a high official position, who was acquainted with Ski, came to Harambouvville, where he had a niece staying,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

and appeared at one of the Verdurins' Wednesdays. M. de Charlus was especially polite to him (at Morel's request), principally in order that on his return to Paris the Academician might enable him to attend various private concerts, rehearsals and so forth, at which the violinist would be playing. The Academician, who was flattered, and was naturally a charming person, promised, and kept his promise. The Baron was deeply touched by all the consideration which this personage (who, for his own part, was exclusively and passionately a lover of women) shewed him, all the facilities that he procured to enable him to see Morel, in those official quarters which the profane world may not enter, all the opportunities by which the celebrated artist secured that the young virtuoso might shew himself, might make himself known, by naming him in preference to others of equal talent for auditions which were likely to make a special stir. But M. de Charlus never suspected that he ought to be all the more grateful to the maestro in that the latter, doubly deserving, or, if you prefer it, guilty twice over, was completely aware of the relations between the young violinist and his noble patron. He favoured them, certainly without any sympathy for them, being unable to comprehend any other love than that for the woman who had inspired the whole of his music, but from moral indifference, a professional readiness to oblige, social affability, snobbishness. As for his doubts as to the character of those relations, they were so scanty that, at his first dinner at la Raspelière, he had inquired of Ski, speaking of M. de Charlus and Morel, as he might have spoken of a man and his mistress: "Have they been long together?" But, too much the man of the world to let the parties concerned

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

see what was in his mind, prepared, should any gossip arise among Morel's fellow-students, to rebuke them, and to reassure Morel by saying to him in a fatherly tone: "One hears that sort of thing about everybody nowadays," he did not cease to load the Baron with civilities which the latter thought charming, but quite natural, being incapable of suspecting the eminent maestro of so much vice or of so much virtue. For the things that were said behind M. de Charlus's back, the expressions used about Morel, nobody was ever base enough to repeat to him. And yet this simple situation is enough to shew that even that thing universally decried, which would find no defender anywhere: the breath of scandal, has itself, whether it be aimed at us and so become especially disagreeable to us, or inform us of something about a third person of which we were unaware, a psychological value of its own. It prevents the mind from falling asleep over the fictitious idea that it has of what it supposes things to be when it is actually no more than their outward appearance. It turns this appearance inside out with the magic dexterity of an idealist philosopher and rapidly presents to our gaze an unsuspected corner of the reverse side of the fabric. How could M. de Charlus have imagined the remark made of him by a certain tender relative: "How on earth can you suppose that Memé is in love with me, you forget that I am a woman!" And yet she was genuinely, deeply attached to M. de Charlus. Why then need we be surprised that in the case of the Verdurins, whose affection and goodwill he had no title to expect, the remarks which they made behind his back (and they did not, as we shall see, confine themselves to remarks), were so different from what he

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

imagined them to be, that is to say from a mere repetition of the remarks that he heard when he was present? The latter alone decorated with affectionate inscriptions the little ideal tent to which M. de Charlus retired at times to dream by himself, when he introduced his imagination for a moment into the idea that the Verdurins held of him. Its atmosphere was so congenial, so cordial, the repose it offered so comforting, that when M. de Charlus, before going to sleep, had withdrawn to it for a momentary relief from his worries, he never emerged from it without a smile. But, for each one of us, a tent of this sort has two sides: as well as the side which we suppose to be the only one, there is the other which is normally invisible to us, the true front, symmetrical with the one that we know, but very different, whose decoration, in which we should recognise nothing of what we expected to see, would horrify us, as being composed of the hateful symbols of an unsuspected hostility. What a shock for M. de Charlus, if he had found his way into one of these enemy tents, by means of some piece of scandal as though by one of those service stairs where obscene drawings are scribbled outside the back doors of flats by unpaid tradesmen or dismissed servants. But, just as we do not possess that sense of direction with which certain birds are endowed, so we lack the sense of our own visibility as we lack that of distances, imagining as quite close to us the interested attention of the people who on the contrary never give us a thought, and not suspecting that we are at the same time the sole preoccupation of others. And so M. de Charlus lived in a state of deception like the fish which thinks that the water in which it is swimming extends beyond the glass wall of its aquarium which

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

mirrors it, while it does not see close beside it in the shadow the human visitor who is amusing himself by watching its movements, or the all-powerful keeper who, at the unforeseen and fatal moment, postponed for the present in the case of the Baron (for whom the keeper, in Paris, will be Mme. Verdurin), will extract it without compunction from the place in which it was happily living to cast it into another. Moreover, the races of mankind, in so far as they are not merely collections of individuals, may furnish us with examples more vast, but identical in each of their parts, of this profound, obstinate and disconcerting blindness. Up to the present, if it was responsible for M. de Charlus's discoursing to the little clan remarks of a wasted subtlety or of an audacity which made his listeners smile at him in secret, it had not yet caused him, nor was it to cause him at Balbec any serious inconvenience. A trace of albumen, of sugar, of cardiac arrhythmia, does not prevent life from remaining normal for the man who is not even conscious of it, when only the physician sees in it a prophecy of catastrophes in store. At presence the fondness—whether Platonic or not—that M. de Charlus felt for Morel merely led the Baron to say spontaneously in Morel's absence that he thought him very good looking, supposing that this would be taken in all innocence, and thereby acting like a clever man who when summoned to make a statement before a Court of Law will not be afraid to enter into details which are apparently to his disadvantage but for that very reason are more natural and less vulgar than the conventional protestations of a stage culprit. With the same freedom, always between Saint-Martin du Chêne and Doncières-Ouest—or conversely on the return jour-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

ney—M. de Charlus would readily speak of men who had, it appeared, very strange morals, and would even add: "After all, I say strange, I don't know why, for there's nothing so very strange about that," to prove to himself how thoroughly he was at his ease with his audience. And so indeed he was, provided that it was he who retained the initiative, and that he knew his gallery to be mute and smiling, disarmed by credulity or good manners.

When M. de Charlus was not speaking of his admiration for Morel's beauty, as though it had no connexion with an inclination—called a vice—he would refer to that vice, but as though he himself were in no way addicted to it. Sometimes indeed he did not hesitate to call it by its name. As after examining the fine binding of his volume of Balzac I asked him which was his favourite novel in the *Comédie Humaine*, he replied, his thoughts irresistibly attracted to the same topic: "Either one thing or the other, a tiny miniature like the *Curé de Tours* and the *Femme abandonnée*, or one of the great frescoes like the series of *Illusions perdues*. What! You've never read *Illusions perdues*? It's wonderful. The scene where Carlos Herrera asks the name of the château he is driving past, and it turns out to be Rastignac, the home of the young man he used to love. And then the abbé falls into a reverie which Swann once called, and very aptly, the *Tristesse d'Olimpio* of paederasty. And the death of Lucien! I forget who the man of taste was who, when he was asked what event in his life had most distressed him, replied: 'The death of Lucien de Rubempré in *Splendeurs et Misères*.'" "I know that Balzac is all the rage this year, as pessimism was last," Brichot interrupted. "But, at the risk of distressing the hearts that

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

are smitten with the Balzacian fever, without laying any claim, damme, to being a policeman of letters, or drawing up a list of offences against the laws of grammar, I must confess that the copious improviser whose alarming lucubrations you appear to me singularly to overrate, has always struck me as being an insufficiently meticulous scribe. I have read these *Illusions perdues* of which you are telling us, Baron, flagellating myself to attain to the fervour of an initiate, and I confess in all simplicity of heart that those serial instalments of bombastic balderdash, written in double Dutch—and in triple Dutch: *Esther heureuse, Où mènent les mauvais chemins, A combien l'amour revient aux vieillards*, have always had the effect on me of the *Mystères de Rocambole*, exalted by an inexplicable preference to the precarious position of a masterpiece." "You say that because you know nothing of life," said the Baron, doubly irritated, for he felt that Brichot would not understand either his aesthetic reasons or the other kind. "I quite realise," replied Brichot, "that, to speak like Master François Rabelais, you mean that I am *moult sorbonagre, sorbonicole et sorboniforme*. And yet, just as much as any of the comrades, I like a book to give an impression of sincerity and real life, I am not one of those clerks. . . ." "The *quart d'heure de Rabelais*," the Doctor broke in, with an air no longer of uncertainty but of assurance as to his own wit. ". . . who take a vow of literature following the rule of the Abbaye-aux-Bois, yielding obedience to M. le Vicomte de Chateaubriand, Grand Master of common form, according to the strict rule of the humanists. M. le Vicomte de Chateaubriand's mistake. . . ." "With fried potatoes?" put in Dr. Cottard. "He is the patron

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

saint of the brotherhood," continued Brichot, ignoring the wit of the Doctor, who, on the other hand, alarmed by the don's phrase, glanced anxiously at M. de Charlus. Brichot had seemed wanting in tact to Cottard, whose pun had brought a delicate smile to the lips of Princess Sherbatoff. "With the Professor, the mordant irony of the complete sceptic never forfeits its rights," she said kindly, to shew that the scientist's witticism had not passed unperceived by herself. "The sage is of necessity sceptical," replied the Doctor. "It's not my fault. *Gnothi seauton*, said Socrates. He was quite right, excess in anything is a mistake. But I am dumbfounded when I think that those words have sufficed to keep Socrates's name alive all this time. What is there in his philosophy, very little when all is said. When one reflects that Charcot and others have done work a thousand times more remarkable, work which moreover is at least founded upon something, upon the suppression of the pupillary reflex as a syndrome of general paralysis, and that they are almost forgotten. After all, Socrates was nothing out of the common. They were people who had nothing better to do, and spent their time strolling about and splitting hairs. Like Jesus Christ: 'Love one another!' it's all very pretty." "My dear," Mme. Cottard implored. "Naturally my wife protests, women are all neurotic." "But, my dear Doctor, I am not neurotic," murmured Mme. Cottard. "What, she is not neurotic! When her son is ill, she exhibits phenomena of insomnia. Still, I quite admit that Socrates, and all the rest of them, are necessary for a superior culture, to acquire the talent of exposition. I always quote his *gnothi seauton* to my pupils at the beginning of the course. Père Bouchard, when

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

he heard or it, congratulated me.” “I am not one of those who hold to form for form’s sake, any more than I should treasure in poetry the rhyme millionaire,” replied Brichot. “But all the same the *Comédie Humaine*—which is far from human—is more than the antithesis of those works in which the art exceeds the matter, as that worthy hack Ovid says. And it is permissible to choose a middle course, which leads to the presbytery of Meudon or the hermitage of Ferney, equidistant from the Valley of Wolves, in which René superbly performed the duties of a merciless pontificate, and from les Jardies, where Honoré de Balzac, browbeaten by the bailiffs, never ceased voiding upon paper to please a Polish woman, like a zealous apostle of balderdash.”

“Chateaubriand is far more alive now than you say, and Balzac is, after all, a great writer,” replied M. de Charlus, still too much impregnated with Swann’s tastes not to be irritated by Brichot, “and Balzac was acquainted with even those passions which the rest of the world ignores, or studies only to castigate them. Without referring again to the immortal *Illusions perdues*; *Sarrazine*, *La Fille aux yeux d’or*, *Une passion dans le désert*, even the distinctly enigmatic *Fausse Maîtresse* can be adduced in support of my argument. When I spoke of this ‘unnatural’ aspect of Balzac to Swann, he said to me: ‘You are of the same opinion as Taine.’ I never had the honour of knowing Monsieur Taine,” M. de Charlus continued, with that irritating habit of inserting an otiose “Monsieur” to which people in society are addicted, as though they imagine that by styling a great writer “Monsieur” they are doing him an honour, perhaps keeping him at his proper distance, and making it evident

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

that they do not know him personally. "I never knew Monsieur Taine, but I felt myself greatly honoured by being of the same opinion as he." However, in spite of these ridiculous social affectations, M. de Charlus was extremely intelligent, and it is probable that if some remote marriage had established a connexion between his family and that of Balzac, he would have felt (no less than Balzac himself, for that matter) a satisfaction which he would have been unable to help displaying as a praiseworthy sign of condescension.

Now and again, at the station after Saint-Martin du Chêne, some young men would get into the train. M. de Charlus could not refrain from looking at them, but as he cut short and concealed the attention that he was paying them, he gave it the air of hiding a secret, more personal even than his real secret; one would have said that he knew them, allowed his acquaintance to appear in spite of himself, after he had accepted the sacrifice, before turning again to us, like children who, in consequence of a quarrel among their respective parents, have been forbidden to speak to certain of their schoolfellows, but who when they meet them cannot forego the temptation to raise their heads before lowering them again before their tutor's menacing cane.

At the word borrowed from the Greek with which M. de Charlus in speaking of Balzac had ended his comparison of the *Tristesse d'Olympio* with the *Splendeurs et Misères*, Ski, Brichot and Cottard had glanced at one another with a smile perhaps less ironical than stamped with that satisfaction which people at a dinner-party would shew who had succeeded in making Dreyfus talk about his own case, or the Empress Eugénie about her

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

reign. They were hoping to press him a little farther upon this subject, but we were already at Doncières, where Morel joined us. In his presence, M. de Charlus kept a careful guard over his conversation and, when Ski tried to bring it back to the love of Carlos Herrera for Lucien de Rubempré, the Baron assumed the vexed, mysterious, and finally (seeing that nobody was listening to him) severe and judicial air of a father who hears people saying something indecent in front of his daughter. Ski having shewn some determination to pursue the subject, M. de Charlus, his eyes starting out of his head, raised his voice and said, in a significant tone, looking at Albertine, who as a matter of fact could not hear what we were saying, being engaged in conversation with Mme. Cottard and Princess Sherbatoff, and with the suggestion of a double meaning of a person who wishes to teach ill bred people a lesson: "I think it is high time we began to talk of subjects that are likely to interest this young lady." But I quite realised that, to him, the young lady was not Albertine but Morel; he proved, as it happened, later on, the accuracy of my interpretation by the expressions that he employed when he begged that there might be no more of such conversation in front of Morel. "You know," he said to me, speaking of the violinist, "that he is not at all what you might suppose, he is a very respectable youth who has always behaved himself, he is very serious." And one gathered from these words that M. de Charlus regarded sexual inversion as a danger as menacing to young men as prostitution is to women, and that if he employed the epithet "respectable," of Morel it was in the sense that it has when applied to a young shop-girl. Then Brichot, to change the conversation,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

asked me whether I intended to remain much longer at Incarville. I had pointed out to him more than once, but in vain, that I was staying not at Incarville but at Balbec, he always repeated the mistake, for it was by the name of Incarville or Balbec-Incarville that he described this section of the coast. There are people like that, who speak of the same things as ourselves but call them by a slightly different name. A certain lady of the Faubourg Saint-Germain used invariably to ask me, when she meant to refer to the Duchesse de Guermantes, whether I had seen Zénaïde lately, or Oriane-Zénaïde, the effect of which was that at first I did not understand her. Probably there had been a time when, some relative of Mme. de Guermantes being named Oriane, she herself, to avoid confusion, had been known as Oriane-Zénaïde. Perhaps, too, there had originally been a station only at Incarville, from which one went in a carriage to Balbec. "Why, what have you been talking about?" said Albertine, astonished at the solemn, paternal tone which M. de Charlus had suddenly adopted. "About Balzac," the Baron hastily replied, "and you are wearing this evening the very same clothes as the Princesse de Cadignan, not her first gown, which she wears at the dinner-party, but the second." This coincidence was due to the fact that, in choosing Albertine's clothes, I sought inspiration in the taste that she had acquired thanks to Elstir, who greatly appreciated a sobriety which might have been called British, had it not been tempered with a gentler, more flowing grace that was purely French. As a rule the garments that he chose offered to the eye a harmonious combination of grey tones like the dress of Diane de Cadignan. M. de Charlus was almost the

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

only person capable of appreciating Albertine's clothes at their true value; at a glance, his eye detected what constituted their rarity, justified their price; he would never have said the name of one stuff instead of another, and could always tell who had made them. Only he preferred—in women—a little more brightness and colour than Elstir would allow. And so this evening she cast a glance at me half smiling, half troubled, wrinkling her little pink cat's nose. Indeed, meeting over her skirt of grey crêpe de chine, her jacket of grey cheviot gave the impression that Albertine was dressed entirely in grey. But, making a sign to me to help her, because her puffed sleeves needed to be smoothed down or pulled up, for her to get into or out of her jacket, she took it off, and as her sleeves were of a Scottish plaid in soft colours, pink, pale blue, dull green, pigeon's breast, the effect was as though in a grey sky there had suddenly appeared a rainbow. And she asked herself whether this would find favour with M. de Charlus. "Ah!" he exclaimed in delight, "now we have a ray, a prism of colour. I offer you my sincerest compliments." "But it is this gentleman who has earned them," Albertine replied politely, pointing to myself, for she liked to shew what she had received from me. "It is only women who do not know how to dress that are afraid of colours," went on M. de Charlus. "A dress may be brilliant without vulgarity and quiet without being dull. Besides, you have not the same reasons as Mme. de Cadignan for wishing to appear detached from life, for that was the idea which she wished to instil into d'Arthez by her grey gown." Albertine, who was interested in this mute language of clothes, questioned M. de Charlus about the Princesse de Ca-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

dignan. "Oh! It is a charming tale," said the Baron in a dreamy tone. "I know the little garden in which Diane de Cadignan used to stroll with M. d'Espard. It belongs to one of my cousins." All this talk about his cousin's garden," Brichot murmured to Cottard, "may, like his pedigree, be of some importance to this worthy Baron. But what interest can it have for us who are not privileged to walk in it, do not know the lady, and possess no titles of nobility?" For Brichot had no suspicion that one might be interested in a gown and in a garden as works of art, and that it was in the pages of Balzac that M. de Charlus saw, in his mind's eye, the garden paths of Mme. de Cadignan. The Baron went on: "But you know her," he said to me, speaking of this cousin, and, by way of flattering me, addressing himself to me as to a person who, exiled amid the little clan, was to M. de Charlus, if not a citizen of his world, at any rate a visitor to it. "Anyhow you must have seen her at Mme. de Villeparisis's." "Is that the Marquise de Villeparisis who owns the château at Baucieux?" asked Brichot with a captivated air. "Yes, do you know her?" inquired M. de Charlus dryly. "No, not at all," replied Brichot, "but our colleague Norpois spends part of his holidays every year at Baucieux. I have had occasion to write to him there." I told Morel, thinking to interest him, that M. de Norpois was a friend of my father. But not a movement of his features shewed that he had heard me, so little did he think of my parents, so far short did they fall in his estimation of what my great-uncle had been, who had employed Morel's father as his valet, and, as a matter of fact, being, unlike the rest of the family, fond of giving trouble, had left a golden memory among

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

his servants. "It appears that Mme. de Villeparisis is a superior woman; but I have never been allowed to judge of that for myself, nor for that matter has any of my colleagues. For Norpois, who is the soul of courtesy and affability at the Institute, has never introduced any of us to the Marquise. I know of no one who has been received by her except our friend Thureau-Dangin, who had an old family connexion with her, and also Gaston Boissier, whom she was anxious to meet because of an essay which interested her especially. He dined with her once and came back quite enthralled by her charm. Mme. Boissier, however, was not invited." At the sound of these names, Morel melted in a smile. "Ah! Thureau-Dangin," he said to me with an air of interest as great as had been his indifference when he heard me speak of the Marquis de Norpois and my father. "Thureau-Dangin; why, he and your uncle were as thick as thieves. Whenever a lady wanted a front seat for a reception at the Academy, your uncle would say: 'I shall write to Thureau-Dangin.' And of course he got the ticket at once, for you can understand that M. Thureau-Dangin would never have dared to refuse anything to your uncle, who would have been certain to pay him out for it afterwards if he had. I can't help smiling, either, when I hear the name Boissier, for that was where your uncle ordered all the presents he used to give the ladies at the New Year. I know all about it, because I knew the person he used to send for them." He had not only known him, the person was his father. Some of these affectionate allusions by Morel to my uncle's memory were prompted by the fact that we did not intend to remain permanently in the Hôtel Guermantes, where we

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

had taken an apartment only on account of my grandmother. Now and again there would be talk of a possible move. Now, to understand the advice that Charlie Morel gave me in this connexion, the reader must know that my great-uncle had lived, in his day, at 40bis Boulevard Malesherbes. The consequence was that, in the family, as we were in the habit of frequently visiting my uncle Adolphe until the fatal day when I made a breach between my parents and him by telling them the story of the lady in pink, instead of saying "at your uncle's" we used to say "at 40bis." If I were going to call upon some kinswoman, I would be warned to go first of all "to 40bis," in order that my uncle might not be offended by my not having begun my round with him. He was the owner of the house and was, I must say, very particular as to the choice of his tenants, all of whom either were or became his personal friends. Colonel the Baron de Vatry used to look in every day and smoke a cigar with him in the hope of making him consent to pay for repairs. The carriage entrance was always kept shut. If my uncle caught sight of a cloth or a rug hanging from one of the windowsills he would dash into the room and have it removed in less time than the police would take to do so nowadays. All the same, he did let part of the house, reserving for himself only two floors and the stables. In spite of this, knowing that he was pleased when people praised the house, we used always to talk of the comfort of the "little mansion" as though my uncle had been its sole occupant, and he allowed us to speak, without uttering the formal contradiction that might have been expected. The "little mansion" was certainly comfortable (my uncle having installed in it

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

all the most recent inventions). But there was nothing extraordinary about it. Only, my uncle, while saying with a false modesty "my little hovel," was convinced, or in any case had instilled into his valet, the latter's wife, the coachman, the cook, the idea that there was no place in Paris to compare, for comfort, luxury, and general attractiveness, with the little mansion. Charles Morel had grown up in this belief. Nor had he outgrown it. And so, even on days when he was not talking to me, if in the train I mentioned to anyone else the possibility of our moving, at once he would smile at me and, with a wink of connivance, say: "Ah! What you want is something in the style of *40bis*! That's a place that would suit you down to the ground! Your uncle knew what he was about. I am quite sure that in the whole of Paris there's nothing to compare with *40bis*."

The melancholy air which M. de Charlus had assumed in speaking of the Princesse de Cadignan left me in no doubt that the tale in question had not reminded him only of the little garden of a cousin to whom he was not particularly attached. He became lost in meditation, and, as though he were talking to himself: "The secrets of the Princesse de Cadignan!" he exclaimed, "What a masterpiece! How profound, how heartrending the evil reputation of Diane, who is afraid that the man she loves may hear of it. What an eternal truth, and more universal than might appear, how far it extends!" He uttered these words with a sadness in which nevertheless one felt that he found a certain charm. Certainly M. de Charlus, unaware to what extent precisely his habits were or were not known, had been trembling for some time past at the thought that when he returned to Paris and was seen

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

there in Morel's company, the latter's family might intervene and so his future happiness be jeopardised. This eventuality had probably not appeared to him hitherto save as something profoundly disagreeable and painful. But the Baron was an artist to his finger-tips. And now that he had begun to identify his own position with that described by Balzac, he took refuge, in a sense, in the tale, and for the calamity which was perhaps in store for him and did not in any case cease to alarm him, he had the consolation of finding in his own anxiety what Swann and also Saint-Loup would have called something "quite Balzacian." This identification of himself with the Princesse de Cadignan had been made easy for M. de Charlus by virtue of the mental transposition which was becoming habitual with him and of which he had already furnished several examples. It was enough in itself, moreover, to make the mere conversion of a woman, as the beloved object, into a young man immediately set in motion about him the whole sequence of social complications which develop round a normal love affair. When, for any reason, we introduce once and for all time a change in the calendar, or in the daily time-table, if we make the year begin a few weeks later, or if we make midnight strike a quarter of an hour earlier, as the days will still consist of twenty-four hours and the months of thirty days, everything that depends upon the measure of time will remain unaltered. Everything may have been changed without causing any disturbance, since the ratio of the figures is still the same. So it is with lives which adopt Central European time, or the Eastern calendar. It seems even that the gratification a man derives from keeping an actress played a part in these relations.

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

When, after their first meeting, M. de Charlus had made inquiries as to Morel's actual position, he must certainly have learned that he was of humble extraction, but a girl with whom we are in love does not forfeit our esteem because she is the child of poor parents. On the other hand, the well known musicians to whom he had addressed his inquiries, had—and not even from any personal motive, unlike the friends who, when introducing Swann to Odette, had described her to him as more difficult and more sought after than she actually was—simply in the stereotyped manner of men in a prominent position overpraising a beginner, answered the Baron: "Ah! Great talent, has made a name for himself, of course he is still quite young, highly esteemed by the experts, will go far." And, with the mania which leads people who are innocent of inversion to speak of masculine beauty: "Besides, it is charming to watch him play; he looks better than anyone at a concert; he has lovely hair, holds himself so well; his head is exquisite, he reminds one of a violinist in a picture." And so M. de Charlus, raised to a pitch of excitement moreover by Morel himself, who did not fail to let him know how many offers had been addressed to him, was flattered by the prospect of taking him home with him, of making a little nest for him to which he would often return. For during the rest of the time he wished him to enjoy his freedom, which was necessary to his career, which M. de Charlus meant him, however much money he might feel bound to give him, to continue, either because of the thoroughly "Germantes" idea that a man ought to do something, that he acquires merit only by his talent, and that nobility or money is simply the additional cypher that multiplies a

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

figure, or because he was afraid lest, having nothing to do and remaining perpetually in his company, the violinist might grow bored. Moreover he did not wish to deprive himself of the pleasure which he found, at certain important concerts, in saying to himself: "The person they are applauding at this moment is coming home with me to-night." Fashionable people, when they are in love and whatever the nature of their love, apply their vanity to anything that may destroy the anterior advantages from which their vanity would have derived satisfaction.

Morel, feeling that I bore him no malice, being sincerely attached to M. de Charlus, and at the same time absolutely indifferent physically to both of us, ended by treating me with the same display of warm friendship as a courtesan who knows that you do not desire her and that her lover has a sincere friend in you who will not attempt to part him from her. Not only did he speak to me exactly as Rachel, Saint-Loup's mistress, had spoken to me long ago, but what was more, to judge by what M. de Charlus reported to me, he used to say to him about me in my absence the same things that Rachel had said about me to Robert. In fact M. de Charlus said to me: "He likes you so much," as Robert had said: "She likes you so much." And just as the nephew on behalf of his mistress, so it was on Morel's behalf that the uncle often invited me to come and dine with them. There were, for that matter, just as many storms between them as there had been between Robert and Rachel. To be sure, after Charlie (Morel) had left us, M. de Charlus would sing his praises without ceasing, repeating—the thought of it was flattering to him—that the violinist was so good to him. But it was evident nevertheless that often

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

Charlie, even in front of all the faithful, wore an irritated expression, instead of always appearing happy and submissive as the Baron would have wished. This irritation became so violent in course of time, owing to the weakness which led M. de Charlus to forgive Morel his want of politeness, that the violinist made no attempt to conceal, if he did not even deliberately assume it. I have seen M. de Charlus, on entering a railway carriage in which Morel was sitting with some of his soldier friends, greeted with a shrug of the musician's shoulders, accompanied by a wink in the direction of his comrades. Or else he would pretend to be asleep, as though this incursion bored him beyond words. Or he would begin to cough, and the others would laugh, derisively mimicking the affected speech of men like M. de Charlus; would draw Charlie into a corner, from which he would return, as though under compulsion, to sit by M. de Charlus, whose heart was pierced by all these cruelties. It is inconceivable how he can have put up with them; and these ever varied forms of suffering set the problem of happiness in fresh terms for M. de Charlus, compelled him not only to demand more, but to desire something else, the previous combination being vitiated by a horrible memory. And yet, painful as these scenes came to be, it must be admitted that at first the genius of the humble son of France traced for Morel, made him assume charming forms of simplicity, of apparent frankness, even of an independent pride which seemed to be inspired by disinterestedness. This was not the case, but the advantage of this attitude was all the more on Morel's side since, whereas the person who is in love is continually forced to return to the charge, to increase his efforts, it is

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

on the other hand easy for him who is not in love to proceed along a straight line, inflexible and graceful. It existed by virtue of the privilege of the race in the face—so open—of this Morel whose heart was so tightly shut, that face indued with the neo-Hellenic grace which blooms in the basilicas of Champagne. Notwithstanding his affectation of pride, often when he caught sight of M. de Charlus at a moment when he was not expecting to see him, he would be embarrassed by the presence of the little clan, would blush, lower his eyes, to the delight of the Baron, who saw in this an entire romance. It was simply a sign of irritation and shame. The former sometimes found expression; for, calm and emphatically decent as Morel's attitude generally was, it was not without frequent contradictions. Sometimes, indeed, at something which the Baron said to him, Morel would come out, in the harshest tone, with an insolent retort which shocked everybody. M. de Charlus would lower his head with a sorrowful air, make no reply, and with that faculty which doting fathers possess of believing that the coldness, the rudeness of their children has passed unnoticed, would continue undeterred to sing the violinist's praises. M. de Charlus was not, indeed, always so submissive, but as a rule his attempts at rebellion proved abortive, principally because, having lived among people in society, in calculating the reactions that he might provoke he made allowance for the baser instincts, whether original or acquired. Now, instead of these, he encountered in Morel a plebeian tendency to spells of indifference. Unfortunately for M. de Charlus, he did not understand that, with Morel, everything else must give place when the Conservatoire (and the good reputation of the Conserva-

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

toire, but with this, which was to be a more serious matter, we are not at present concerned) was in question. Thus, for instance, people of the middle class will readily change their surnames out of vanity, noblemen for personal advantage. To the young violinist, on the contrary, the name Morel was inseparably linked with his first prize for the violin, and so impossible to alter. M. de Charlus would have liked Morel to take everything from himself, including a name. Going upon the facts that Morel's other name was Charles, which resembled Charlus, and that the place where they were in the habit of meeting was called les Charmes, he sought to persuade Morel that, a pleasant name, easy to pronounce, being half the battle for artistic fame, the virtuoso ought without hesitation to take the name Charmel, a discreet allusion to the scene of their intimacy. Morel shrugged his shoulders. As a conclusive argument, M. de Charlus was unfortunately inspired to add that he had a footman of that name. He succeeded only in arousing the furious indignation of the young man. "There was a time when my ancestors were proud of the title of groom, of butler to the King." "There was also a time," replied Morel haughtily, "when my ancestors cut off your ancestors' heads." M. de Charlus would have been greatly surprised had he been told that even if, abandoning the idea of "Charmel," he made up his mind to adopt Morel and to confer upon him one of the titles of the Guermantes family which were at his disposal but which circumstances, as we shall see, did not permit him to offer the violinist, the other would decline, thinking of the artistic reputation attached to the name Morel, and of the things that would be said about him in "the class." So far

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

above the Faubourg Saint-Germain did he place the Rue Bergère. And so M. de Charlus was obliged to content himself with having symbolical rings made for Morel, bearing the antique device: PLVS VLTRA CAR'LVS. Certainly, in the face of an adversary of a sort with which he was unfamiliar, M. de Charlus ought to have changed his tactics. But which of us is capable of that? Moreover, if M. de Charlus made blunders, Morel was not guiltless of them either. Far more than the actual circumstance which brought about the rupture between them, what was destined, provisionally, at least (but this provisional turned out to be final), to ruin him with M. de Charlus was that his nature included not only the baseness which made him lie down under harsh treatment and respond with insolence to kindness. Running parallel to this innate baseness, there was in him a complicated neurasthenia of ill breeding, which, roused to activity on every occasion when he was in the wrong or was becoming a nuisance, meant that at the very moment when he had need of all his politeness, gentleness, gaiety, to disarm the Baron, he became sombre, petulant, tried to provoke discussions on matters where he knew that the other did not agree with him, maintained his own hostile attitude with a weakness of argument and a slashing violence which enhanced that weakness. For, very soon running short of arguments, he invented fresh ones as he went along, in which he displayed the full extent of his ignorance and folly. These were barely noticeable when he was in a friendly mood and sought only to please. On the contrary, nothing else was visible in his fits of sombre humour, when, from being inoffensive, they became odious. Whereupon M. de Charlus felt that he could en-

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

sure no more, that his only hope lay in a brighter morrow, while Morel, forgetting that the Baron was enabling him to live in the lap of luxury, gave an ironical smile, of condescending pity, and said: "I have never taken anything from anybody. Which means that there is nobody to whom I owe a word of thanks."

In the mean time, and as though he had been dealing with a man of the world, M. de Charlus continued to give vent to his rage, whether genuine or feigned, but in either case ineffective. It was not always so, however. Thus one day (which must be placed, as a matter of fact, subsequent to this initial period) when the Baron was returning with Charlie and myself from a luncheon party at the Verdurins', and expecting to spend the rest of the afternoon and the evening with the violinist at Doncières, the latter's dismissal of him, as soon as we left the train, with: "No, I've an engagement," caused M. de Charlus so keen a disappointment, that in spite of all his attempts to meet adversity with a brave face, I saw the tears trickling down and melting the paint beneath his eyes, as he stood helpless by the carriage door. Such was his grief that, since we intended, Albertine and I, to spend the rest of the day at Doncières, I whispered to her that I would prefer that we did not leave M. de Charlus by himself, as he seemed, I could not say why, to be unhappy. The dear girl readily assented. I then asked M. de Charlus if he would not like me to accompany him for a little. He also assented, but declined to put my "cousin" to any trouble. I found a certain charm (and one, doubtless, not to be repeated, since I had made up my mind to break with her), in saying to her quietly, as though she were my wife: "Go back home by

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

yourself, I shall see you this evening," and in hearing her, as a wife might, give me permission to do as I thought fit, and authorise me, if M. de Charlus, to whom she was attached, needed my company, to place myself at his disposal. We proceeded, the Baron and I, he waddling obesely, his jesuitical eyes downcast, and I following him, to a café where we were given beer. I felt M. de Charlus's eyes turning uneasily towards the execution of some plan. Suddenly he called for paper and ink, and began to write at an astonishing speed. While he covered sheet after sheet, his eyes glittered with furious fancies. When he had written eight pages: "May I ask you to do me a great service?" he said to me. "You will excuse my sealing this note. I am obliged to do so. You will take a carriage, a motor-car if you can find one, to get there as quickly as possible. You are certain to find Morel in his quarters, where he has gone to change his clothes. Poor boy, he tried to bluster a little when we parted, but you may be sure that his heart is fuller than mine. You will give him this note, and, if he asks you where you met me, you will tell him that you stopped at Doncières (which, for that matter, is the truth) to see Robert, which is not quite the truth perhaps, but that you met me with a person whom you do not know, that I seemed to be extremely angry, that you thought you heard something about sending seconds (I am, as a matter of fact, fighting a duel to-morrow). Whatever you do, don't say that I am asking for him, don't make any effort to bring him here, but if he wishes to come with you, don't prevent him from doing so. Go, my boy, it is for his good, you may be the means of averting a great tragedy. While you are away, I am going to write to my seconds. I have

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

prevented you from spending the afternoon with your cousin. I hope that she will bear me no ill will for that, indeed I am sure of it. For her's is a noble soul, and I know that she is one of the people who are strong enough not to resist the greatness of circumstances. You must thank her on my behalf. I am personally indebted to her, and I am glad that it should be so." I was extremely sorry for M. de Charlus; it seemed to me that Charlie might have prevented this duel, of which he was perhaps the cause, and I was revolted, if that were the case, that he should have gone off with such indifference, instead of staying to help his protector. My indignation was increased when, on reaching the house in which Morel lodged, I recognised the voice of the violinist, who, feeling the need of an outlet for his happiness, was singing boisterously: "Some Sunday morning, when the wedding-bells rrring!" If poor M. de Charlus had heard him, he who wished me to believe, and doubtless believed himself that Morel's heart at that moment was full! Charlie began to dance with joy when he caught sight of me. "Hallo, old boy! (excuse me, addressing you like that; in this damned military life, one picks up bad habits) what luck, seeing you. I have nothing to do all evening. Do let's go somewhere together. We can stay here if you like, or take a boat if you prefer that, or we can have some music, it's all the same to me." I told him that I was obliged to dine at Balbec, he seemed anxious that I should invite him to dine there also, but I refrained from doing so. "But if you're in such a hurry, why have you come here?" "I have brought you a note from M. de Charlus." At that moment all his gaiety vanished; his face contracted. "What! He can't leave me alone even

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

here. So I'm a slave, am I? Old boy, be a sport. I'm not going to open his letter. You can tell him that you couldn't find me." "Wouldn't it be better to open it, I fancy it contains something serious." "No, certainly not, you don't know all the lies, the infernal tricks that old scoundrel's up to. It's a dodge to make me go and see him. Very well! I'm not going, I want to have an evening in peace." "But isn't there going to be a duel tomorrow?" I asked Morel, whom I supposed to be equally well informed. "A duel?" he repeated with an air of stupefaction. "I never heard a word about it. After all, it doesn't matter a damn to me, the dirty old beast can go and get plugged in the guts if he likes. But wait a minute, this is interesting, I'm going to look at his letter after all. You can tell him that you left it here for me, in case I should come in." While Morel was speaking to me, I was looking with amazement at the beautiful books which M. de Charlus had given him, and which littered his room. The violinist having refused to accept those labelled: "I belong to the Baron" etc., a device which he felt to be insulting to himself, as a mark of vassalage, the Baron, with the sentimental ingenuity in which his ill-starred love abounded, had substituted others, originated by his ancestors, but ordered from the binder according to the circumstances of a melancholy friendship. Sometimes they were terse and confident, as *Spes mea* or *Expectata non eludet*. Sometimes merely resigned, as *J'attendrai*. Others were gallant: *Mesmes plaisir du mestre*, or counselled chastity, such as that borrowed from the family of Simiane, sprinkled with azure towers and lilies, and given a fresh meaning: *Sustendant lilia turres*. Others, finally, were despairing, and appointed a meeting in

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

heaven with him who had spurned the donor upon earth: *Manet ultima caelo*, and (finding the grapes which he had failed to reach too sour, pretending not to have sought what he had not secured) M. de Charlus said in one: *Non mortale quod opto*. But I had not time to examine them all.

If M. de Charlus, in dashing this letter down upon paper had seemed to be carried away by the demon that was inspiring his flying pen, as soon as Morel had broken the seal (a leopard between two roses gules, with the motto: *atavis et armis*) he began to read the letter as feverishly as M. de Charlus had written it, and over those pages covered at breakneck speed his eye ran no less rapidly than the Baron's pen. "Good God!" he exclaimed, "this is the last straw! But where am I to find him? Heaven only knows where he is now." I suggested that if he made haste he might still find him perhaps at a tavern where he had ordered beer as a restorative. "I don't know whether I shall be coming back," he said to his landlady, and added *in petto*, "it will depend on how the cat jumps." A few minutes later we reached the café. I remarked M. de Charlus's expression at the moment when he caught sight of me. When he saw that I did not return unaccompanied, I could feel that his breath, his life were restored to him. Feeling that he could not get on that evening without Morel, he had pretended that somebody had told him that two officers of the regiment had spoken evil of him in connexion with the violinist and that he was going to send his seconds to call upon them. Morel had foreseen the scandal, his life in the regiment made impossible, and had hastened to the spot. In doing which he had not been altogether wrong.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

For to make his falsehood more plausible, M. de Charlus had already written to two of his friends (one was Cottard) asking them to be his seconds. And, if the violinist had not appeared, we may be certain that, in the frantic state in which M. de Charlus then was (and to change his sorrow into rage), he would have sent them with a challenge to some officer or other with whom it would have been a relief to him to fight. During the interval, M. de Charlus, remembering that he came of a race that was of purer blood than the House of France, told himself that it was really very good of him to take so much trouble over the son of a butler whose employer he would not have condescended to know. On the other hand, if his only amusement, almost, was now in the society of disreputable persons, the profoundly ingrained habit which such persons have of not replying to a letter, of failing to keep an appointment without warning you beforehand, without apologising afterwards, aroused in him, since, often enough, his heart was involved, such a wealth of emotion and the rest of the time caused him such irritation, inconvenience and anger, that he would sometimes begin to regret the endless letters over nothing at all, the scrupulous exactitude of Ambassadors and Princes, who, even if, unfortunately, their personal charms left his cold, gave him at any rate some sort of peace of mind. Accustomed to Morel's ways, and knowing how little hold he had over him, how incapable he was of insinuating himself into a life in which friendships that were vulgar but consecrated by force of habit occupied too much space and time to leave a stray hour for the great nobleman, evicted, proud, and vainly imploring, M. de Charlus was so convinced that the musician was not coming, was

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

so afraid of losing him for ever if he went too far, that he could barely repress a cry of joy when he saw him appear. But feeling himself the victor, he felt himself bound to dictate the terms of peace and to extract from them such advantages as he might. "What are you doing here?" he said to him. "And you?" he went on, gazing at myself, "I told you, whatever you did, not to bring him back with you." "He didn't want to bring me," said Morel, turning upon M. de Charlus, in the artlessness of his coquetry, a glance conventionally mournful and languorously old-fashioned, with an air, which he doubtless thought to be irresistible, of wanting to kiss the Baron and to burst into tears. "It was I who insisted on coming in spite of him. I come, in the name of our friendship, to implore you on my bended knees not to commit this rash act." M. de Charlus was wild with joy. The reaction was almost too much for his nerves; he managed, however, to control them. "The friendship to which you appeal at a somewhat inopportune moment," he replied in a dry tone, "Ought, on the contrary, to make you support me when I decide that I cannot allow the impertinences of a fool to pass unheeded. However, even if I chose to yield to the prayers of an affection which I have known better inspired, I should no longer be in a position to do so, my letters to my seconds have been sent off and I have no doubt of their consent. You have always behaved towards me like a little idiot and, instead of priding yourself, as you had every right to do, upon the predilection which I had shewn for you, instead of making known to the mob of serjeants or servants among whom the law of military service compels you to live, what a source of incomparable satisfaction a friendship

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

such as mine was to you, you have sought to make excuses for yourself, almost to make an idiotic merit of not being grateful enough. I know that in so doing," he went on, in order not to let it appear how deeply certain scenes had humiliated him, "you are guilty merely of having let yourself be carried away by the jealousy of others. But how is it that at your age you are childish enough (and a child ill-bred enough) not to have seen at once that your election by myself and all the advantages that must result for you from it were bound to excite jealousies, that all your comrades while they egged you on to quarrel with me were plotting to take your place? I have not thought it necessary to tell you of the letters that I have received in that connexion from all the people in whom you place most confidence. I scorn the overtures of those flunkeys as I scorn their ineffective mockery. The only person for whom I care is yourself, since I am fond of you, but affection has its limits and you ought to have guessed as much." Harsh as the word flunkey might sound in the ears of Morel, whose father had been one, but precisely because his father had been one, the explanation of all social misadventures by "jealousy," an explanation fatuous and absurd, but of inexhaustible value, which with a certain class never fails to "catch on" as infallibly as the old tricks of the stage with a theatrical audience or the threat of the clerical peril in a parliament, found in him an adherence hardly less solid than in Françoise, or the servants of Mme. de Guermantes, for whom jealousy was the sole cause of the misfortunes that beset humanity. He had no doubt that his comrades had tried to oust him from his position and was all the more wretched at the thought of this disastrous, albeit imaginary duel. "Oh!

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

How dreadful," exclaimed Charlie. "I shall never hold up my head again. But oughtn't they to see you before they go and call upon this officer?" "I don't know, I suppose they ought. I've sent word to one of them that I shall be here all evening and can give him his instructions." "I hope that before he comes I can make you listen to reason; you will, anyhow, let me stay with you," Morel asked him tenderly. This was all that M. de Charlus wanted. He did not however yield at once. "You would do wrong to apply in this case the 'Whoso loveth well, chasteneth well' of the proverb, for it is yourself whom I loved well, and I intend to chasten even after our parting those who have basely sought to do you an injury. Until now, their inquisitive insinuations, when they dared to ask me how a man like myself could mingle with a boy of your sort, sprung from the gutter, I have answered only in the words of the motto of my La Rochefoucauld cousins: 'Tis my pleasure.' I have indeed pointed out to you more than once that this pleasure was capable of becoming my chiefest pleasure, without there resulting from your arbitrary elevation any degradation of myself." And in an impulse of almost insane pride he exclaimed, raising his arms in the air: "*Tantus ab uno splendor!*" To condescend is not to descend," he went on in a calmer tone, after this delirious outburst of pride and joy. "I hope at least that my two adversaries, notwithstanding their inferior rank, are of a blood that I can shed without reproach. I have made certain discreet inquiries in that direction which have reassured me. If you retained a shred of gratitude towards me, you ought on the contrary to be proud to see that for your sake I am reviving the bellicose humour of my ancestors, saying

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

like them in the event of a fatal issue, now that I have learned what a little rascal you are: 'Death to me is life.'" And M. de Charlus said this sincerely, not only because of his love for Morel, but because a martial instinct which he quaintly supposed to have come down to him from his ancestors filled him with such joy at the thought of fighting that this duel, which he had originally invented with the sole object of making Morel come to him, he could not now abandon without regret. He had never engaged in any affair of the sort without at once imagining himself the victor, and identifying himself with the illustrious Constable de Guermantes, whereas in the case of anyone else this same action of taking the field appeared to him to be of the utmost insignificance. "I am sure it will be a fine sight," he said to us in all sincerity, dwelling upon each word. "To see Sarah Bernhardt in *L'Aiglon*, what is that but tripe? Mounet-Sully in *Oedipus*, tripe! At the most it assumes a certain pallid transfiguration when it is performed in the Arena of Nîmes. But what is it compared to that unimaginable spectacle, the lineal descendant of the Constable engaged in battle." And at the mere thought of such a thing, M. de Charlus, unable to contain himself for joy, began to make passes in the air which recalled Molière, made us take the precaution of drawing our glasses closer, and fear that, when the swords crossed, the combatants, doctor and seconds would at once be wounded. "What a tempting spectacle it would be for a painter. You who know Monsieur Elstir," he said to me, "you ought to bring him." I replied that he was not in the neighbourhood. M. de Charlus suggested that he might be summoned by telegraph. "Oh! I say it in his interest," he

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

added in response to my silence. "It is always interesting for a master—which he is, in my opinion—to record such an instance of racial survival. And they occur perhaps once in a century."

But if M. de Charlus was enchanted at the thought of a duel which he had meant at first to be entirely fictitious, Morel was thinking with terror of the stories that might be spread abroad by the regimental band and might, thanks to the stir that would be made by this duel, penetrate to the holy of holies in the Rue Bergère. Seeing in his mind's eye the "class" fully informed, he became more and more insistent with M. de Charlus, who continued to gesticulate before the intoxicating idea of a duel. He begged the Baron to allow him not to leave him until the day after the next, the supposed day of the duel, so that he might keep him within sight and try to make him listen to the voice of reason. So tender a proposal triumphed over M. de Charlus's final hesitations. He said that he would try to find a way out of it, that he would postpone his final decision for two days. In this fashion, by not making any definite arrangement at once, M. de Charlus knew that he could keep Charlie with him for at least two days, and make use of the time to fix future engagements with him in exchange for his abandoning the duel, an exercise, he said, which in itself delighted him and which he would not forego without regret. And in saying this he was quite sincere, for he had always enjoyed taking the field when it was a question of crossing swords or exchanging shots with an adversary. Cottard arrived at length, although extremely late, for, delighted to act as second but even more upset by the prospect, he had been obliged to halt at all the cafés or farms by the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

way, asking the occupants to be so kind as to shew him the way to "No. 100" or "a certain place." As soon as he arrived, the Baron took him into another room, for he thought it more correct that Charlie and I should not be present at the interview, and excelled in making the most ordinary room serve for the time being as throne-room or council chamber. When he was alone with Cottard he thanked him warmly, but informed him that it seemed probable that the remark which had been repeated to him had never really been made, and requested that, in view of this, the Doctor would be so good as let the other second know that, barring possible complications, the incident might be regarded as closed. Now that the prospect of danger was withdrawn, Cottard was disappointed. He was indeed tempted for a moment to give vent to anger, but he remembered that one of his masters, who had enjoyed the most successful medical career of his generation, having failed to enter the Academy at his first election by two votes only, had put a brave face on it and had gone and shaken hands with his successful rival. And so the Doctor refrained from any expression of indignation which could have made no difference, and, after murmuring, he the most timorous of men, that there were certain things which one could not overlook, added that it was better so, that this solution delighted him. M. de Charlus, desirous of shewing his gratitude to the Doctor, just as the Duke his brother would have straightened the collar of my father's greatcoat or rather as a Duchess would put her arm round the waist of a plebeian lady, brought his chair close to the Doctor's, notwithstanding the dislike that he felt for the other. And, not only without any physical pleasure, but having first to overcome a

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

physical repulsion, as a Guermantes, not as an invert, in taking leave of the Doctor, he clasped his hand and caressed it for a moment with the affection of a rider rubbing his horse's nose and giving it a lump of sugar. But Cottard, who had never allowed the Baron to see that he had so much as heard the vaguest rumours as to his morals, but nevertheless regarded him in his private judgment as one of the class of "abnormals" (indeed, with his habitual inaccuracy in the choice of terms, and in the most serious tone, he said of one of M. Verdurin's footmen: "Isn't he the Baron's mistress?"), persons of whom he had little personal experience; imagined that this stroking of his hand was the immediate prelude to an act of violence in anticipation of which, the duel being a mere pretext, he had been enticed into a trap and led by the Baron into this remote apartment where he was about to be forcibly outraged. Not daring to stir from his chair, to which fear kept him glued, he rolled his eyes in terror, as though he had fallen into the hands of a savage who, for all he could tell, fed upon human flesh. At length M. de Charlus, releasing his hand and anxious to be hospitable to the end, said: "Won't you come and take something with us, as the saying is, what in the old days used to be called a *mazagran* or a *gloria*, drinks that are no longer to be found, as archaeological curiosities, except in the plays of Labiche and the cafés of Doncières. A *gloria* would be distinctly suitable to the place, eh?, and to the occasion, what do you say?" "I am President of the Anti-Alcohol League," replied Cottard. "Some country sawbones has only got to pass, and it will be said that I do not practise what I preach. *Os homini sublime dedit coelumque tueri*," he added, not that this had any bearing

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

on the matter, but because his stock of Latin quotations was extremely limited, albeit sufficient to astound his pupils. M. de Charlus shrugged his shoulders and led Cottard back to where we were, after exacting a promise of secrecy which was all the more important to him since the motive for the abortive duel was purely imaginary. It must on no account reach the ears of the officer whom he had arbitrarily selected as his adversary. While the four of us sat there drinking, Mme. Cottard, who had been waiting for her husband outside, where M. de Charlus could see her quite well, though he had made no effort to summon her, came in and greeted the Baron, who held out his hand to her as though to a housemaid, without rising from his chair, partly in the manner of a king receiving homage, partly as a snob who does not wish a woman of humble appearance to sit down at his table, partly as an egoist who enjoys being alone with his friends, and does not wish to be bothered. So Mme. Cottard remained standing while she talked to M. de Charlus and her husband. But, possibly because politeness, the knowledge of what "ought to be done," is not the exclusive privilege of the Guermantes, and may all of a sudden illuminate and guide the most uncertain brains, or else because, himself constantly unfaithful to his wife, Cottard felt at odd moments, as a sort of compensation, the need to protect her against anyone else who failed in his duty to her, the Doctor quickly frowned, a thing I had never seen him do before, and, without consulting M. de Charlus, said in a tone of authority: "Come, Léontine, don't stand about like that, sit down." "But are you sure I'm not disturbing you?" Mme. Cottard inquired timidly of M. de Charlus, who, surprised by the Doctor's

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

tone, had made no observation. Whereupon, without giving him a second chance, Cottard repeated with authority: "I told you to sit down."

Presently the party broke up, and then M. de Charlus said to Morel: "I conclude from all this business, which has ended more happily than you deserved, that you are incapable of looking after yourself and that, at the expiry of your military service, I must lead you back myself to your father, like the Archangel Raphael sent by God to the young Tobias." And the Baron began to smile with an air of grandeur, and a joy which Morel, to whom the prospect of being thus led home afforded no pleasure, did not appear to share. In the exhilaration of comparing himself to the Archangel, and Morel to the son of Tobit, M. de Charlus no longer thought of the purpose of his speech which had been to explore the ground and see whether, as he hoped, Morel would consent to come with him to Paris. Intoxicated with his love or with his self-love, the Baron did not see or pretended not to see the violinist's wry grimace, for, leaving him by himself in the café, he said to me with a proud smile: "Did you notice how, when I compared him to the son of Tobit, he became wild with joy? That was because, being extremely intelligent, he at once understood that the Father in whose company he was henceforth to live was not his father after the flesh, who must be some horrible valet with moustaches, but his spiritual father, that is to say Myself. What a triumph for him! How proudly he reared his head! What joy he felt at having understood me. I am sure that he will now repeat day by day: 'O God Who didst give the blessed Archangel Raphael as *guide* to thy servant Tobias, upon a long journey, grant to us,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Thy servants, that we may ever be protected by him and armed with his succour.' I had no need even," added the Baron, firmly convinced that he would one day sit before the Throne of God, "to tell him that I was the heavenly messenger, he realised it for himself, and was struck dumb with joy!" And M. de Charlus (whom his joy, on the contrary, did not deprive of speech), regardless of the passers-by who turned to stare at him, supposing that he must be a lunatic, cried out by himself and at the top of his voice raising his hands in the air: "Alleluia!"

This reconciliation gave but a temporary respite to M. de Charlus's torments; often, when Morel had gone out on training too far away for M. de Charlus to be able to go and visit him or to send me to talk to him, he would write the Baron desperate and affectionate letters, in which he assured him that he was going to put an end to his life because, owing to a ghastly affair, he must have twenty-five thousand francs. He did not mention what this ghastly affair was, and had he done so, it would doubtless have been an invention. As far as the money was concerned, M. de Charlus would willingly have sent him it, had he not felt that it would make Charlie independent of him and free to receive the favours of some one else. And so he refused, and his telegrams had the dry, cutting tone of his voice. When he was certain of their effect, he hoped that Morel would never forgive him, for, knowing very well that it was the contrary that would happen, he could not help dwelling upon all the drawbacks that would be revived with this inevitable tie. But, if no answer came from Morel, he lay awake all night, had not a moment's peace, so great is the number of the things of which we live in ignorance, and of the

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

interior and profound realities that remain hidden from us. And so he would form every conceivable supposition as to the enormity which put Morel in need of twenty-five thousand francs, gave it every possible shape, labelled it with, one after another, many proper names. I believe that at such moments M. de Charlus (in spite of the fact that his snobbishness, which was now diminishing, had already been overtaken if not outstripped by his increasing curiosity as to the ways of the lower orders) must have recalled with a certain longing the lovely, many-coloured whirl of the fashionable gatherings at which the most charming men and women sought his company only for the disinterested pleasure that it afforded them, where nobody would have dreamed of "doing him down," of inventing a "ghastly affair," on the strength of which one is prepared to take one's life, if one does not at once receive twenty-five thousand francs. I believe that then, and perhaps because he had after all remained more "Combray" at heart than myself, and had grafted a feudal dignity upon his Germanic pride, he must have felt that one cannot with impunity lose one's heart to a servant, that the lower orders are by no means the same thing as society, that in short he did not "get on" with the lower orders as I have always done.

The next station upon the little railway, Maineville, reminds me of an incident in which Morel and M. de Charlus were concerned. Before I speak of it, I ought to mention that the halt of the train at Maineville (when one was escorting to Balbec a fashionable stranger who, to avoid giving trouble, preferred not to stay at la Raspelière) was the occasion of scenes less painful than that which I am just about to describe. The stranger, having

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

his light luggage with him in the train, generally found that the Grand Hotel was rather too far away, but, as there was nothing until one came to Balbec except small bathing places with uncomfortable villas, had, yielding to a preference for comfortable surroundings, resigned himself to the long journey when, as the train came to a standstill at Maineville, he saw the Palace staring him in the face, and never suspected that it was a house of ill fame. "But don't let us go any farther," he would invariably say to Mme. Cottard, a woman well-known for her practical judgment and sound advice. "There is the very thing I want. What is the use of going on to Balbec, where I certainly shan't find anything better. I can tell at a glance that it has all the modern comforts; I can quite well invite Mme. Verdurin there, for I intend, in return for her hospitality, to give a few little parties in her honour. She won't have so far to come as if I stay at Balbec. This seems to me the very place for her, and for your wife, my dear Professor. There are bound to be sitting rooms, we can have the ladies there. Between you and me, I can't imagine why Mme. Verdurin didn't come and settle here instead of taking la Raspelière. It is far healthier than an old house like la Raspelière, which is bound to be damp, and is not clean either, they have no hot water laid on, one can never get a wash. Now, Maineville strikes me as being far more attractive. Mme. Verdurin would have played the hostess here to perfection. However, tastes differ; I intend, anyhow, to remain here. Mme. Cottard, won't you come along with me; we shall have to be quick, for the train will be starting again in a minute. You can pilot me through that house, which you must know inside out, for you must

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

often have visited it. It is the ideal setting for you." The others would have the greatest difficulty in making the unfortunate stranger hold his tongue, and still more in preventing him from leaving the train, while he, with the obstinacy which often arises from a blunder, insisted, gathered his luggage together and refused to listen to a word until they had assured him that neither Mme. Verdurin nor Mme. Cottard would ever come to call upon him there. "Anyhow, I am going to make my headquarters there. Mme. Verdurin has only to write, if she wishes to see me."

The incident that concerns Morel was of a more highly specialised order. There were others, but I confine myself at present, as the train halts and the porter calls out "Doncières," "Grattevast," "Maineville" etc., to noting down the particular memory that the watering-place or garrison town recalls to me. I have already mentioned Maineville (*media villa*) and the importance that it had acquired from that luxurious establishment of women which had recently been built there, not without arousing futile protests from the mothers of families. But before I proceed to say why Maineville is associated in my memory with Morel and M. de Charlus, I must make a note of the disproportion (which I shall have occasion to examine more thoroughly later on) between the importance that Morel attached to keeping certain hours free, and the triviality of the occupations to which he pretended to devote them, this same disproportion recurring amid the explanations of another sort which he gave to M. de Charlus. He, who played the disinterested artist for the Baron's benefit (and might do so without risk, in view of the generosity of his protector), when he wished

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

to have the evening to himself, in order to give a lesson, etc., never failed to add to his excuse the following words, uttered with a smile of cupidity: "Besides, there may be forty francs to be got out of it. That's always something. You will let me go, for, don't you see, it's all to my advantage. Damn it all, I haven't got a regular income like you, I have my way to make in the world, it's a chance of earning a little money." Morel, in professing his anxiety to give his lesson, was not altogether insincere. For one thing, it is false to say that money has no colour. A new way of earning them gives a fresh lustre to coins that are tarnished with use. Had he really gone out to give a lesson, it is probable that a couple of louis handed to him as he left the house by a girl pupil would have produced a different effect on him from a couple of louis coming from the hand of M. de Charlus. Besides, for a couple of louis the richest of men would travel miles, which become leagues when one is the son of a valet. But frequently M. de Charlus had his doubts as to the reality of the violin lesson, doubts which were increased by the fact that often the musician pleaded excuses of another sort, entirely disinterested from the material point of view, and at the same time absurd. In this Morel could not help presenting an image of his life, but one that deliberately, and unconsciously too, he so darkened that only certain parts of it could be made out. For a whole month he placed himself at M. de Charlus's disposal, on condition that he might keep his evenings free, for he was anxious to put in a regular attendance at a course of algebra. Come and see M. de Charlus after the class? Oh, that was impossible, the classes went on, sometimes, very late. "Even after two o'clock in the

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

morning?" the Baron asked. "Sometimes." "But you can learn algebra just as easily from a book." "More easily, for I don't get very much out of the lectures." "Very well, then! Besides, algebra can't be of any use to you." "I like it. It soothes my nerves." "It cannot be algebra that makes him ask leave to go out at night," M. de Charlus said to himself. "Can he be working for the police?" In any case Morel, whatever objection might be made, reserved certain evening hours, whether for algebra or for the violin. On one occasion it was for neither, but for the Prince de Guermantes who, having come down for a few days to that part of the coast, to pay the Princesse de Luxembourg a visit, picked up the musician, without knowing who he was or being recognised by him either, and offered him fifty francs to spend the night with him in the brothel at Maineville; a twofold pleasure for Morel, in the profit received from M. de Guermantes and in the delight of being surrounded by women whose sunburned breasts would be visible to the naked eye. In some way or other M. de Charlus got wind of what had occurred and of the place appointed, but did not discover the name of the seducer. Mad with jealousy, and in the hoping of finding out who he was, he telegraphed to Jupien, who arrived two days later, and when, early in the following week, Morel announced that he would again be absent, the Baron asked Jupien if he would undertake to bribe the woman who kept the establishment, and make her promise to hide the Baron and himself in some place where they could witness what occurred. "That's all right. I'll see to it, dearie," Jupien assured the Baron. It is hard to imagine to what extent this anxiety was agitating, and by so doing had

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

momentarily enriched the mind of M. de Charlus. Love is responsible in this way for regular volcanic upheavals of the mind. In his, which, a few days earlier, resembled a plain so uniform that as far as the eye could reach it would have been impossible to make out an idea rising above the level surface, there had suddenly sprung into being, hard as stone, a chain of mountains, but mountains as elaborately carved as if some sculptor, instead of quarrying and carting his marble from them, had chiselled it on the spot, in which there writhed in vast titanic groups Fury, Jealousy, Curiosity, Envy, Hatred, Suffering, Pride, Terror and Love.

Meanwhile the evening on which Morel was to be absent had come. Jupien's mission had proved successful. He and the Baron were to be there about eleven o'clock, and would be put in a place of concealment. When they were still three streets away from this gorgeous house of prostitution (to which people came from all the fashionable resorts in the neighborhood), M. de Charlus had begun to walk upon tiptoe, to disguise his voice, to beg Jupien not to speak so loud, lest Morel should hear them from inside. Whereas, on creeping stealthily into the entrance hall, M. de Charlus, who was not accustomed to places of the sort, found himself, to his terror and amazement, in a gathering more clamorous than the Stock Exchange or a sale room. It was in vain that he begged the girls who gathered round him to moderate their voices; for that matter their voices were drowned by the stream of announcements and awards made by an old "assistant matron" in a very brown wig, her face crackled with the gravity of a Spanish attorney or priest, who kept shouting at every minute in a voice of

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

thunder, ordering the doors to be alternately opened and shut, like a policeman regulating the flow of traffic: "Take this gentleman to twenty-eight, the Spanish room." "Let no more in." "Open the door again, these gentlemen want Mademoiselle Noémie. She's expecting them in the Persian parlour." M. de Charlus was as terrified as a countryman who has to cross the boulevards; while, to take a simile infinitely less sacrilegious than the subject represented on the capitals of the porch of the old church of Corleville, the voices of the young maids repeated in a lower tone, unceasingly, the assistant matron's orders, like the catechisms that we hear school-children chanting beneath the echoing vault of a parish church in the country. However great his alarm, M. de Charlus who, in the street, had been trembling lest he should make himself heard, convinced in his own mind that Morel was at the window, was perhaps not so frightened after all in the din of those huge staircases on which one realised that from the rooms nothing could be seen. Coming at length to the end of his calvary, he found Mlle. Noémie, who was to conceal him with Jupien, but began by shutting him up in a sumptuously furnished Persian sitting-room from which he could see nothing at all. She told him that Morel had asked for some orangeade, and that as soon as he was served the two visitors would be taken to a room with a transparent panel. In the mean time, as some one was calling for her, she promised them, like a fairy godmother, that to help them to pass the time she was going to send them a "clever little lady." For she herself was called away. The clever little lady wore a Persian wrapper, which she proposed to remove. M. de Charlus begged her to do nothing of the sort, and she

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

rang for champagne which cost 40 francs a bottle. Morel, as a matter of fact, was, during this time, with the Prince de Guermantes; he had, for form's sake, pretended to go into the wrong room by mistake, had entered one in which there were two women, who had made haste to leave the two gentlemen undisturbed. M. de Charlus knew nothing of this, but was fidgeting with rage, trying to open the doors, sent for Mlle. Noémie, who, hearing the clever little lady give M. de Charlus certain information about Morel which was not in accordance with what she herself had told Jupien, banished her promptly, and sent presently, as a substitute for the clever little lady, a "dear little lady" who exhibited nothing more but told them how respectable the house was and called, like her predecessor, for champagne. The Baron, foaming with rage, sent again for Mlle. Noémie, who said to them: "Yes, it is taking rather long, the ladies are doing poses, he doesn't look as if he wanted to do anything." Finally, yielding to the promises, the threats of the Baron, Mlle. Noémie went away with an air of irritation, assuring them that they would not be kept waiting more than five minutes. The five minutes stretched out into an hour, after which Noémie came and tiptoed in front of M. de Charlus, blind with rage, and Jupien plunged in misery, to a door which stood ajar, telling them: "You'll see splendidly from here. However, it's not very interesting just at present, he is with three ladies, he is telling them about life in his regiment." At length the Baron was able to see through the cleft of the door and also the reflexion in the mirrors beyond. But a deadly terror forced him to lean back against the wall. It was indeed Morel that he saw before him, but, as though the pagan mys-

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

teries and Enchantments still existed, it was rather the shade of Morel, Morel embalmed, not even Morel restored to life like Lazarus, an apparition of Morel, a phantom of Morel, Morel "walking" or "called up" in that room (in which the walls and couches everywhere repeated the emblems of sorcery), that was visible a few feet away from him, in profile. Morel had, as though he were already dead, lost all his colour; among these women, with whom one might have expected him to be making merry, he remained livid, fixed in an artificial immobility; to drink the glass of champagne that stood before him, his arm, sapped of its strength, tried in vain to reach out, and dropped back again. One had the impression of that ambiguous state implied by a religion which speaks of immortality but means by it something that does not exclude annihilation. The women were plying him with questions: "You see," Mlle. Noémie whispered to the Baron, "they are talking to him about his life in the regiment, it's amusing, isn't it?"—here she laughed—"You're glad you came? He is calm, isn't he," she added, as though she were speaking of a dying man. The women's questions came thick and fast, but Morel, inanimate, had not the strength to answer them. Even the miracle of a whispered word did not occur. M. de Charlus hesitated for barely a moment before he grasped what had really happened, namely that, whether from clumsiness on Jupien's part when he had called to make the arrangements, or from the expansive power of a secret lodged in any breast, which means that no secret is ever kept, or from the natural indiscretion of these ladies, or from their fear of the police, Morel had been told that two gentlemen had paid a large sum to be allowed to spy

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

on him, unseen hands had spirited away the Prince de Guermantes, metamorphosed into three women, and had placed the unhappy Morel, trembling, paralysed with fear, in such a position that if M. de Charlus had but a poor view of him, he, terrorised, speechless, not daring to lift his glass for fear of letting it fall, had a perfect view of the Baron.

The story moreover had no happier ending for the Prince de Guermantes. When he had been sent away, so that M. de Charlus should not see him, furious at his disappointment, without suspecting who was responsible for it, he had implored Morel, still without letting him know who he was, to make an appointment with him for the following night in the tiny villa which he had taken and which, despite the shortness of his projected stay in it, he had, obeying the same insensate habit which we have already observed in Mme. de Villeparisis, decorated with a number of family keepsakes, so that he might feel more at home. And so, next day, Morel, turning his head every moment, trembling with fear of being followed and spied upon by M. de Charlus, had finally, having failed to observe any suspicious passer-by, entered the villa. A valet shewed him into the sitting-room, telling him that he would inform "Monsieur" (his master had warned him not to utter the word "Prince" for fear of arousing suspicions). But when Morel found himself alone, and went to the mirror to see that his forelock was not disarranged, he felt as though he were the victim of a hallucination. The photographs on the mantelpiece (which the violinist recognised, for he had seen them in M. de Charlus's room) of the Princesse de Guermantes, the Duchesse de Luxembourg, Mme. de Villeparisis, left

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

him at first petrified with fright. At the same moment he caught sight of the photograph of M. de Charlus, which was placed a little behind the rest. The Baron seemed to be concentrating upon Morel a strange, fixed glare. Mad with terror, Morel, recovering from his first stupor, never doubting that this was a trap into which M. de Charlus had led him in order to put his fidelity to the test, sprang at one bound down the steps of the villa and set off along the road as fast as his legs would carry him, and when the Prince (thinking he had kept a casual acquaintance waiting sufficiently long, and not without asking himself whether it were quite prudent and whether the person might not be dangerous) entered the room, he found nobody there. In vain did he and his valet, afraid of burglary, and armed with revolvers, search the whole house, which was not large, every corner of the garden, the basement; the companion of whose presence he had been certain had completely vanished. He met him several times in the course of the week that followed. But on each occasion it was Morel, the dangerous person, who turned tail and fled, as though the Prince were more dangerous still. Confirmed in his suspicions, Morel never outgrew them, and even in Paris the sight of the Prince de Guermantes was enough to make him take to his heels. Whereby M. de Charlus was protected from a betrayal which filled him with despair, and avenged, without ever having imagined such a thing, still less how it came about.

But already my memories of what I have been told about all this are giving place to others, for the B. A. G., resuming its slow crawl, continues to set down or take up passengers at the following stations.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

At Grattevast, where his sister lived with whom he had been spending the afternoon, there would sometimes appear M. Pierre de Verjus, Comte de Crécy (who was called simply the Comte de Crécy), a gentleman without means but of the highest nobility, whom I had come to know through the Cambremers, although he was by no means intimate with them. As he was reduced to an extremely modest, almost a penurious existence, I felt that a cigar, a "drink" were things that gave him so much pleasure that I formed the habit, on the days when I could not see Albertine, of inviting him to Balbec. A man of great refinement, endowed with a marvellous power of self-expression, snow-white hair, and a pair of charming blue eyes, he generally spoke in a faint murmur, very delicately, of the comforts of life in a country house, which he had evidently known from experience, and also of pedigrees. On my inquiring what was the badge engraved on his ring, he told me with a modest smile: "It is a branch of verjuice." And he added with a relish, as though sipping a vintage: "Our arms are a branch of verjuice—symbolic, since my name is Verjus—slipped and leaved vert." But I fancy that he would have been disappointed if at Balbec I had offered him nothing better to drink than verjuice. He liked the most expensive wines, because he had had to go without them, because of his profound knowledge of what he was going without, because he had a palate, perhaps also because he had an exorbitant thirst. And so when I invited him to dine at Balbec, he would order the meal with a refinement of skill, but ate a little too much, and drank copiously, made them warm the wines that needed warming, place those that needed cooling upon ice. Before dinner and

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

after he would give the right date or number for a port or an old brandy, as he would have given the date of the creation of a marquisate which was not generally known but with which he was no less familiar.

As I was in Aimé's eyes a favoured customer, he was delighted that I should give these special dinners and would shout to the waiters: "Quick, lay number 25;" he did not even say "lay" but "lay me," as though the table were for his own use. And, as the language of head waiters is not quite the same as that of sub-heads, assistants, boys, and so forth, when the time came for me to ask for the bill he would say to the waiter who had served us, making a continuous, soothing gesture with the back of his hand, as though he were trying to calm a horse that was ready to take the bit in its teeth: "Don't go too fast" (in adding up the bill), "go gently, very gently." Then, as the waiter was retiring with this guidance, Aimé, fearing lest his recommendations might not be carried out to the letter, would call him back: "Here, let me make it out." And as I told him not to bother: "It's one of my principles that we ought never, as the saying is, to sting a customer." As for the manager, since my guest was attired simply, always in the same clothes, which were rather threadbare (albeit nobody would so well have practised the art of dressing expensively, like one of Balzac's dandies, had he possessed the means), he confined himself, out of respect for me, to watching from a distance to see that everything was all right, and ordering, with a glance, a wedge to be placed under one leg of the table which was not steady. This was not to say that he was not qualified, though he concealed his early struggles, to lend a hand like anyone else. It required some excep-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

tional circumstance nevertheless to induce him one day to carve the turkey-poults himself. I was out, but I heard afterwards that he carved them with a sacerdotal majesty, surrounded, at a respectful distance from the service-table, by a ring of waiters who were endeavouring thereby not so much to learn the art as to make themselves conspicuously visible, and stood gaping in open-mouthed admiration. Visible to the manager, for that matter (as he plunged a slow gaze into the flanks of his victims, and no more removed his eyes, filled with a sense of his exalted mission, from them than if he had been expected to read in them some augury), they were certainly not. The hierophant was not conscious of my absence even. When he heard of it, he was distressed: "What, you didn't see me carving the turkey-poults myself?" I replied that having failed, so far, to see Rome, Venice, Siena, the Prado, the Dresden gallery, the Indies, Sarah in *Phèdre*, I had learned to resign myself, and that I would add his carving of turkey-poults to my list. The comparison with the dramatic art (Sarah in *Phèdre*) was the only one that he seemed to understand, for he had already been told by me that on days of gala performances the elder Coquelin had accepted a beginner's parts, even that of a character who says but a single line or nothing at all. "It doesn't matter, I am sorry for your sake. When shall I be carving again? It will need some great event, it will need a war." (It did, as a matter of fact, need the armistice.) From that day onwards, the calendar was changed, time was reckoned thus: "That was the day after the day I carved the turkeys myself." "That's right, a week after the manager carved the turkeys himself." And so this prosectomy furnished, like

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

the Nativity of Christ or the Hegira, the starting point for a calendar different from the rest, but neither so extensively adopted nor so long observed.

The sadness of M. de Crécy's life was due, just as much as to his no longer keeping horses and a succulent table, to his mixing exclusively with people who were capable of supposing that Cambremers and Guermantes were one and the same thing. When he saw that I knew that Legrandin, who had now taken to calling himself Legrand de Méséglise, had no sort of right to that name, being moreover heated by the wine that he was drinking, he broke out in a transport of joy. His sister said to me with an understanding air: "My brother is never so happy as when he has a chance of talking to you." He felt indeed that he was alive now that he had discovered somebody who knew the unimportance of the Cambremers and the greatness of the Guermantes, somebody for whom the social universe existed. So, after the burning of all the libraries on the face of the globe and the emergence of a race entirely unlettered, an old Latin scholar would recover his confidence in life if he heard somebody quoting a line of Horace. And so, if he never left the train without saying to me: "When is our next little gathering?", it was not so much with the hunger of a parasite as with the gluttony of a savant, and because he regarded our symposia at Balbec as an opportunity for talking about subjects which were precious to him and of which he was never able to talk to anyone else, and analogous in that way to those dinners at which assemble on certain specified dates, round the particularly succulent board of the Union Club, the Society of Bibliophiles. He was extremely modest, so far as his own family was con-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

cerned, and it was not from M. de Crécy that I learned that it was a very great family indeed, and a genuine branch transplanted to France of the English family which bears the title of Crecy. When I learned that he was a true Crécy, I told him that one of Mme. de Guermentes's nieces had married an American named Charles Crecy, and said that I did not suppose there was any connexion between them. "None," he said. "Any more than—not, of course, that my family is so distinguished—heaps of Americans who call themselves Montgomery, Berry, Chandos or Capel have with the families of Pembroke, Buckingham or Essex, or with the Duc de Berry." I thought more than once of telling him, as a joke, that I knew Mme. Swann, who as a courtesan had been known at one time by the name Odette de Crécy; but even if the Duc d'Alençon had shewn no resentment when people mentioned in front of him Émilienne d'Alençon, I did not feel that I was on sufficiently intimate terms with M. de Crécy to carry a joke so far. "He comes of a very great family," M. de Montsurvent said to me one day. "His family name is Saylor." And he went on to say that on the wall of his old castle above Incarville, which was now almost uninhabitable and which he, although born to a great fortune, was now too much impoverished to put in repair, was still to be read the old motto of the family. I thought this motto very fine, whether applied to the impatience of a predatory race niched in that eyrie from which its members must have swooped down in the past, or at the present day, to its contemplation of its own decline, awaiting the approach of death in that towering, grim retreat. It is, indeed, in this double sense that this motto plays upon the name Saylor, in the words: "*Ne sçais l'heure.*"

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

At Hermenonville there would get in sometimes M. de Chevregny, whose name, Brichot told us, signified like that of Mgr. de Cabrières, a place where goats assemble. He was related to the Cambremers, for which reason, and from a false idea of what was fashionable, the latter often invited him to Féterne, but only when they had no other guests to dazzle. Living all the year round at Beausoleil, M. de Chevregny had remained more provincial than they. And so when he went for a few weeks to Paris, there was not a moment to waste if he was to "see everything" in the time; so much so that occasionally, a little dazed by the number of spectacles too rapidly digested, when he was asked if he had seen a particular play he would find that he was no longer sure. But this uncertainty was rare, for he had that detailed knowledge of Paris only to be found in people who seldom go there. He advised me which of the "novelties" I ought to see ("It's worth your while"), regarding them however solely from the point of view of the pleasant evening that they might help to spend, and so completely ignoring the aesthetic point of view as never to suspect that they might indeed constitute a "novelty" occasionally in the history of art. So it was that, speaking of everything in the same tone, he told us: "We went once to the Opéra-Comique, but the show there is nothing much. It's called *Pelléas et Mélisande*. It's rubbish. Périer always acts well, but it's better to see him in something else. At the Gymnase, on the other hand, they're doing *La Châtelaine*. We went again to it twice; don't miss it, whatever you do, it's well worth seeing; besides, it's played to perfection; you have Frévalles, Marie Magnier, Baron fils;" and he went on to quote the names of actors of whom I had

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

never heard, and without prefixing Monsieur, Madame or Mademoiselle, like the Duc de Guermantes, who used to speak in the same ceremoniously contemptuous tone of the "songs of Mademoiselle Yvette Guilbert" and the "experiments of Monsieur Charcot." This was not M. de Chevreigny's way, he said "Cornaglia and Dehelly," as he might have said "Voltaire and Montesquieu." For in him, with regard to actors as to everything that was Parisian, the aristocrat's desire to shew his scorn was overcome by the desire to appear on familiar terms of the provincial.

Immediately after the first dinner-party that I had attended at la Raspelière with what was still called at Féterne "the young couple," albeit M. and Mme. de Cambremer were no longer, by any means, in their first youth, the old Marquise had written me one of those letters which one can pick out by their handwriting from among a thousand. She said to me: "Bring your delicious—charming—nice cousin. It will be a delight, a pleasure," always avoiding, and with such unerring dexterity, the sequence that the recipient of her letter would naturally have expected, that I finally changed my mind as to the nature of these diminuendoes, decided that they were deliberate, and found in them the same corruption of taste—transposed into the social key—that drove Sainte-Beuve to upset all the normal relations between words, to alter any expression that was at all conventional. Two methods, taught probably by different masters, came into conflict in this epistolary style, the second making Mme. de Cambremer redeem the monotony of her multiple adjectives by employing them in a descending scale, by avoiding an ending upon the perfect

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

chord. On the other hand, I was inclined to see in these inverse gradations, not an additional refinement, as when they were the handiwork of the Dowager Marquise, but an additional clumsiness whenever they were employed by the Marquis her son or by his lady cousins. For throughout the family, to quite a remote degree of kinship and in admiring imitation of aunt Zélia, the rule of the three adjectives was held in great honour, as was a certain enthusiastic way of catching your breath when you were talking. An imitation that had passed into the blood, moreover; and whenever, in the family circle, a little girl, while still in the nursery, stopped short while she was talking to swallow her saliva, her parents would say: "She takes after aunt Zélia," would feel that as she grew up, her upper lip would soon tend to hide itself beneath a faint moustache, and would make up their minds to cultivate her inherited talent for music. It was not long before the Cambremers were on less friendly terms with Mme. Verdurin than with myself, for different reasons. They felt, they must invite her to dine. The "young" Marquise said to me contemptuously: "I don't see why we shouldn't invite that woman, in the country one meets anybody, it needn't involve one in anything." But being at heart considerably impressed, they never ceased to consult me as to the way in which they should carry out their desire to be polite. I thought that as they had invited Albertine and myself to dine with some friends of Saint-Loup, smart people of the neighbourhood, who owned the château of Gourville, and represented a little more than the cream of Norman society, for which Mme. Verdurin, while pretending never to look at it, thirsted, I advised the Cambremers to invite the Mistress to meet

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

them. But the lord and lady of Féterne, in their fear (so timorous were they) of offending their noble friends, or (so simple were they) that M. and Mme. Verdurin might be bored by people who were not intellectual, or yet again (since they were impregnated with a spirit of routine which experience had not fertilised) of mixing different kinds of people, and making a social blunder, declared that it would not be a success, and that it would be much better to keep Mme. Verdurin (whom they would invite with all her little group) for another evening. For this coming evening—the smart one, to meet Saint-Loup's friends—they invited nobody from the little nucleus but Morel, in order that M. de Charlus might indirectly be informed of the brilliant people whom they had in their house, and also that the musician might help them to entertain their guests, for he was to be asked to bring his violin. They threw in Cottard as well, because M. de Cambremer declared that he had “a go” about him, and would be a success at the dinner-table; besides, it might turn out useful to be on friendly terms with a doctor, if they should ever have anybody ill in the house. But they invited him by himself, so as not to “start any complications with the wife.” Mme. Verdurin was furious when she heard that two members of the little group had been invited without herself to dine at Féterne “quite quietly.” She dictated to the doctor, whose first impulse had been to accept, a stiff reply in which he said: “*We* are dining that evening with Mme. Verdurin,” a plural which was to teach the Cambremers a lesson, and to shew them that he was not detachable from Mme. Cottard. As for Morel, Mme. Verdurin had no need to outline a course of impolite behaviour for him, he found one

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

of his own accord, for the following reason. If he preserved, with regard to M. de Charlus, in so far as his pleasures were concerned, an independence which distressed the Baron, we have seen that the latter's influence was making itself felt more and more in other regions, and that he had for instance enlarged the young virtuoso's knowledge of music and purified his style. But it was still, at this point in our story, at least, only an influence. At the same time there was one subject upon which anything that M. de Charlus might say was blindly accepted and put into practice by Morel. Blindly and foolishly, for not only were M. de Charlus's instructions false, but, even had they been justifiable in the case of a great gentleman, when applied literally by Morel they became grotesque. The subject as to which Morel was becoming so credulous and obeyed his master with such docility was that of social distinction. The violinist, who, before making M. de Charlus's acquaintance, had had no conception of society, had taken literally the brief and arrogant sketch of it that the Baron had outlined for him: "There are a certain number of outstanding families," M. de Charlus had told him, "first and foremost the Guermentes, who claim fourteen alliances with the House of France, which is flattering to the House of France if anything, for it was to Aldonce de Guermentes and not to Louis the Fat, his consanguineous but younger brother, that the Throne of France should have passed. Under Louis XIV, we 'draped' at the death of Monsieur, as having the same grandmother as the king; a long way below the Guermentes, one may however mention the families of La Trémoille, descended from the Kings of Naples and the Counts of Poitiers; of d'Uzès, scarcely

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

old as a family, but the premier peers; of Luynes, who are of entirely recent origin, but have distinguished themselves by good marriages; of Choiseul, Harcourt, La Rochefoucauld. Add to these the family of Noailles (notwithstanding the Comte de Toulouse), Montesquiou and Castellane, and, I think I am right in saying, those are all. As for all the little people who call themselves Marquis de Cambremerde or de Vatefairefiche, there is no difference between them and the humblest private in your regiment. It doesn't matter whether you go and p— at Comtesse S—t's or s—t at Baronne P—'s, it's exactly the same, you will have compromised yourself and have used a dirty rag instead of toilet paper. Which is not nice." Morel had piously taken in this history lesson, which was perhaps a trifle cursory, and looked upon these matters as though he were himself a Guermantes and hoped that he might some day have an opportunity of meeting the false La Tour d'Auvergues in order to let them see, by the contemptuous way in which he shook hands, that he did not take them very seriously. As for the Cambremers, here was his very chance to prove to them that they were no better than "the humblest private in his regiment." He did not answer their invitation, and on the evening of the dinner declined at the last moment by telegram, as pleased with himself as if he had behaved like a Prince of the Blood. It must be added here that it is impossible to imagine how intolerable and interfering M. de Charlus could be, in a more general fashion, and even, he who was so clever, how stupid, on all occasions when the flaws in his character came into play. We may say indeed that these flaws are like an intermittent malady of the mind. Who has not observed the fact among

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

women, and even among men, endowed with remarkable intelligence but afflicted with nerves, when they are happy, calm, satisfied with their surroundings, we cannot help admiring their precious gifts, the words that fall from their lips are the literal truth. A touch of headache, the slightest injury to their self-esteem is enough to alter everything. The luminous intelligence, become abrupt, convulsive and narrow, reflects nothing but an irritated, suspicious, teasing self, doing everything that it can to give trouble. The Cambremers were extremely angry; and in the interval other incidents brought about a certain tension in their relations with the little clan. As we were returning, the Cottards, Charlus, Brichot, Morel and I, from a dinner at la Raspelière, one evening after the Cambremers who had been to luncheon with friends at Harambouville had accompanied us for part of our outward journey: "You who are so fond of Balzac, and can find examples of him in the society of to-day," I had remarked to M. de Charlus, "you must feel that those Cambremers come straight out of the *Scènes de la Vie de Province*." But M. de Charlus, for all the world as though he had been their friend, and I had offended him by my remark, at once cut me short: "You say that because the wife is superior to the husband," he informed me in a dry tone. "Oh, I wasn't suggesting that she was the *Muse du département*, or Mme. de Bargeton, although. . . ." M. de Charlus again interrupted me: "Say rather, Mme. de Mortsaufr." The train stopped and Brichot got out. "Didn't you see us making signs to you? You are incorrigible." "What do you mean?" "Why, have you never noticed that Brichot is madly in love with Mme. de Cambremer?" I could see from the attitude of Cot-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

tard and Charlie that there was not a shadow of doubt about this in the little nucleus. I felt that it shewed a trace of malice on their part. "What, you never noticed how distressed he became when you mentioned her," went on M. de Charlus, who liked to shew that he had experience of women, and used to speak of the sentiment which they inspire with a natural air and as though this were the sentiment which he himself habitually felt. But a certain equivocally paternal tone in addressing all young men—notwithstanding his exclusive affection for Morel—gave the lie to the views of a woman-loving man which he expressed. "Oh! These children," he said in a shrill, mincing, sing-song voice, "one has to teach them everything, they are as innocent as a newborn babe, they can't even tell when a man is in love with a woman. I wasn't such a chicken at your age," he added, for he liked to use the expressions of the underworld, perhaps because they appealed to him, perhaps so as not to appear, by avoiding them, to admit that he consorted with people whose current vocabulary they were. A few days later, I was obliged to yield to the force of evidence, and admit that Brichot was enamoured of the Marquise. Unfortunately he accepted several invitations to luncheon with her. Mme. Verdurin decided that it was time to put a stop to these proceedings. Quite apart from the importance of such an intervention to her policy in controlling the little nucleus, explanations of this sort and the dramas to which they gave rise caused her an ever increasing delight which idleness breeds just as much in the middle classes as in the aristocracy. It was a day of great emotion at la Raspelière when Mme. Verdurin was seen to disappear for a whole hour with Brichot,

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

whom (it was known) she proceeded to inform that Mme. de Cambremer was laughing at him, that he was the joke of her drawing-room, that he would end his days in disgrace, having forfeited his position in the teaching world. She went so far as to refer in touching terms to the laundress with whom he was living in Paris, and to their little girl. She won the day, Brichot ceased to go to Féterne, but his grief was such that for two days it was thought that he would lose his sight altogether, while in any case his malady increased at a bound and held the ground it had won. In the mean time, the Cambremers, who were furious with Morel, invited M. de Charlus on one occasion, deliberately, without him. Receiving no reply from the Baron, they began to fear that they had committed a blunder, and, deciding that malice made an evil counsellor, wrote, a little late in the day, to Morel, an ineptitude which made M. de Charlus smile, as it proved to him the extent of his power. "You shall answer for us both that I accept," he said to Morel. When the evening of the dinner came, the party assembled in the great drawing-room of Féterne. In reality, the Cambremers were giving this dinner for those fine flowers of fashion M. and Mme. Féré. But they were so much afraid of displeasing M. de Charlus, that although she had got to know the Férés through M. de Chevregny, Mme. de Cambremer went into a fever when, on the afternoon before the dinner, she saw him arrive to pay a call on them at Féterne. She made every imaginable excuse for sending him back to Beausoleil as quickly as possible, not so quickly, however, that he did not pass, in the courtyard, the Férés, who were as shocked to see him dismissed like this as he himself was ashamed. But,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

whatever happened, the Cambremers wished to spare M. de Charlus the sight of M. de Chevreigny, whom they judged to be provincial because of certain little points which are overlooked in the family circle and become important only in the presence of strangers, who are the last people in the world to notice them. But we do not like to display to them relatives who have remained at the stage which we ourselves have struggled to outgrow. As for M. and Mme. Féré, they were, in the highest sense of the words, what are called "really nice people." In the eyes of those who so defined them, no doubt the Guermentes, the Rohans and many others were also really nice people, but their name made it unnecessary to say so. As everybody was not aware of the exalted birth of Mme. Féré's mother, and the extraordinarily exclusive circle in which she and her husband moved, when you mentioned their name, you invariably added by way of explanation that they were "the very best sort." Did their obscure name prompt them to a sort of haughty reserve? However that may be, the fact remains that the Férés refused to know people on whom a La Trémoille would have called. It needed the position of queen of her particular stretch of coast, which the old Marquise de Cambremer held in the Manche, to make the Férés consent to come to one of her afternoons every year. The Cambremers had invited them to dinner and were counting largely on the effect that would be made on them by M. de Charlus. It was discreetly announced that he was to be one of the party. As it happened, Mme. Féré had never met him. Mme. de Cambremer, on learning this, felt a keen satisfaction, and the smile of the chemist who is about to bring into contact for the

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

first time two particularly important bodies hovered over her face. The door opened, and Mme. de Cambremer almost fainted when she saw Morel enter the room alone. Like a private secretary charged with apologies for his Minister, like a morganatic wife who expresses the Prince's regret that he is unwell (so Mme. de Clinchamp used to apologise for the Duc d'Aumale), Morel said in the airiest of tones: "The Baron can't come. He is not feeling very well, at least I think that is why, I haven't seen him this week," he added, these last words completing the despair of Mme. de Cambremer, who had told M. and Mme. Féré that Morel saw M. de Charlus at every hour of the day. The Cambremers pretended that the Baron's absence gave an additional attraction to their party and, without letting Morel hear them, said to their other guests: "We can do very well without him, can't we, it will be all the better." But they were furious, suspected a plot hatched by Mme. Verdurin, and, tit for tat, when she invited them again to la Raspelière, M. de Cambremer, unable to resist the pleasure of seeing his house again and of mingling with the little group, came, but came alone, saying that the Marquise was so sorry, but her doctor had ordered her to stay in her room. The Cambremers hoped by this partial attendance at once to teach M. de Charlus a lesson, and to shew the Verdurins that they were not obliged to treat them with more than a limited politeness, as Princesses of the Blood used in the old days to "shew out" Duchesses, but only to the middle of the second saloon. After a few weeks, they were scarcely on speaking terms. M. de Cambremer explained this to me as follows: "I must tell you that with M. de Charlus it was rather difficult. He is an extreme

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Dreyfusard. . . ." "Oh, no!" "Yes. . . . Anyhow his cousin the Prince de Guermantes is, they've come in for a lot of abuse over that. I have some relatives who are very particular about that sort of thing. I can't afford to mix with those people, I should quarrel with the whole of my family." "Since the Prince de Guermantes is a Dreyfusard, that will make it all the easier," said Mme. de Cambremer, "for Saint-Loup, who is said to be going to marry his niece, is one too. Indeed, that is perhaps why he is marrying her." "Come now, my dear, you mustn't say that Saint-Loup, who is a great friend of ours, is a Dreyfusard. One ought not to make such allegations lightly," said M. de Cambremer. "You would make him highly popular in the army!" "He was once, but he isn't any longer," I explained to M. de Cambremer. "As for his marrying Mlle. de Guermantes-Brassac, is there any truth in that?" "People are talking of nothing else, but you should be in a position to know." "But I repeat that he told me himself, he was a Dreyfusard," said Mme. de Cambremer. "Not that there isn't every excuse for him, the Guermantes are half German." "The Guermantes in the Rue de Varenne, you can say, are entirely German," said Cancan. "But Saint-Loup is a different matter altogether; he may have any amount of German blood, his father insisted upon maintaining his title as a great nobleman of France, he rejoined the service in 1871 and was killed in the war in the most gallant fashion. I may take rather a strong line about these matters, but it doesn't do to exaggerate either one way or the other. *In medio . . . virtus*, ah, I forget the exact words. It's a remark Doctor Cottard made. Now, there's a man who can always say the appropriate thing.

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

You ought to have a small Larousse in the house." To avoid having to give an opinion as to the Latin quotation, and to get away from the subject of Saint-Loup, as to whom her husband seemed to think that she was wanting in tact, Mme. de Cambremer fell back upon the Mistress whose quarrel with them was even more in need of an explanation. "We were delighted to let la Raspelière to Mme. Verdurin," said the Marquise. "The only trouble is, she appears to imagine that with the house, and everything else that she has managed to tack on to it, the use of the meadow, the old hangings, all sorts of things which weren't in the lease at all, she should also be entitled to make friends with us. The two things are entirely distinct. Our mistake lay in our not having done everything quite simply through a lawyer or an agency. At Féterne it doesn't much matter, but I can just imagine the face my aunt de Ch'nouville would make if she saw old mother Verdurin come marching in, on one of my days, with her hair streaming. As for M. de Charlus, of course, he knows some quite nice people, but he knows some very nasty people too." I asked for details. Driven into a corner, Mme. de Cambremer finally admitted: "People say that it was he who maintained a certain Monsieur Moreau, Morille, Morue, I don't remember. Nothing to do, of course, with Morel, the violinist," she added, blushing. "When I realised that Mme. Verdurin imagined that because she was our tenant in the Manche, she would have the right to come and call upon me in Paris, I saw that it was time to cut the cable."

Notwithstanding this quarrel with the Mistress, the Cambremers were on quite good terms with the faithful,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

and would readily get into our carriage when they were travelling by the train. Just before we reached Douville, Albertine, taking out her mirror for the last time, would sometimes feel obliged to change her gloves, or to take off her hat for a moment, and, with the tortoiseshell comb which I had given her and which she wore in her hair, would smooth the plaits, pull out the puffs, and if necessary, over the undulations which descended in regular valleys to the nape of her neck, push up her chignon. Once we were in the carriages which had come to meet us, we no longer had any idea where we were; the roads were not lighted; we could tell by the louder sound of the wheels that we were passing through a village, we thought we had arrived, we found ourselves once more in the open country, we heard bells in the distance, we forgot that we were in evening dress, and had almost fallen asleep when, at the end of this wide borderland of darkness which, what with the distance we had travelled and the incidents characteristic of all railway journeys, seemed to have carried us on to a late hour of the night and almost half way back to Paris, suddenly after the crunching of the carriage wheels over a finer gravel had revealed to us that we had turned into the park, there burst forth, reintroducing us into a social existence, the dazzling lights of the drawing-room, then of the dining-room where we were suddenly taken aback by hearing eight o'clock strike, that hour which we supposed to have so long since passed, while the endless dishes and vintage wines followed one another round men in black and women with bare arms, at a dinner-party ablaze with light like any real dinner-party, surrounded only, and thereby changing its character, by the double veil, sombre and strange,

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

that was woven for it, with a sacrifice of their first solemnity to this social purpose, by the nocturnal, rural, seaside hours of the journey there and back. The latter indeed obliged us to leave the radiant and soon forgotten splendour of the lighted drawing-room for the carriages in which I arranged to sit beside Albertine so that my mistress might not be left with other people in my absence, and often for another reason as well, which was that we could both do many things in a dark carriage, in which the jolts of the downward drive would moreover give us an excuse, should a sudden ray of light fall upon us, for clinging to one another. When M. de Cambremer was still on visiting terms with the Verdurins, he would ask me: "You don't think that this fog will bring on your choking fits? My sister was terribly bad this morning. Ah! You have been having them too," he said with satisfaction. "I shall tell her that to-night. I know that, as soon as I get home, the first thing she will ask will be whether you have had any lately." He spoke to me of my sufferings only to lead up to his sister's, and made me describe mine in detail simply that he might point out the difference between them and hers. But notwithstanding these differences, as he felt that his sister's choking fits entitled him to speak with authority, he could not believe that what "succeeded" with hers was not indicated as a cure for mine, and it irritated him that I would not try these remedies, for if there is one thing more difficult than submitting oneself to a regime it is refraining from imposing it upon other people. "Not that I need speak, a mere outsider, when you are here before the areopagus, at the fountainhead of wisdom. What does Professor Cottard think about them?" I

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

saw his wife once again, as a matter of fact, because she had said that my "cousin" had odd habits, and I wished to know what she meant by that. She denied having said it, but finally admitted that she had been speaking of a person whom she thought she had seen with my cousin. She did not know the person's name and said faintly that, if she was not mistaken, it was the wife of a banker, who was called Lina, Linette, Lisette, Lia, anyhow something like that. I felt that "wife of a banker" was inserted merely to put me off the scent. I decided to ask Albertine whether this were true. But I preferred to speak to her with an air of knowledge rather than of curiosity. Besides Albertine would not have answered me at all, or would have answered me only with a "no" of which the "n" would have been too hesitating and the "o" too emphatic. Albertine never related facts that were capable of injuring her, but always other facts which could be explained only by them, the truth being rather a current which flows from what people say to us, and which we apprehend, invisible as it may be, than the actual thing that they say. And so when I assured her that a woman whom she had known at Vichy had a bad reputation, she swore to me that this woman was not at all what I supposed, and had never attempted to make her do anything improper. But she added, another day, when I was speaking of my curiosity as to people of that sort, that the Vichy lady had a friend, whom she, Albertine, did not know, but whom the lady had "*promised* to introduce to her." That she should have promised her this, could only mean that Albertine wished it, or that the lady had known that by offering the introduction she would be giving her pleasure. But

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

if I had pointed this out to Albertine, I should have appeared to be depending for my information upon her, I should have put an end to them at once, I should never have learned anything more, I should have ceased to make myself feared. Besides, we were at Balbec, the Vichy lady and her friend lived at Menton; the remoteness, the impossibility of the danger made short work of my suspicions. Often when M. de Cambremer hailed me from the station I had been with Albertine making the most of the darkness, and with all the more difficulty as she had been inclined to resist, fearing that it was not dark enough. "You know, I'm sure Cottard saw us, anyhow, if he didn't, he must have noticed how breathless we were from our voices, just when they were talking about your other kind of breathlessness," Albertine said to me when we arrived at the Douville station where we were to take the little train home. But this homeward, like the outward journey, if, by giving me a certain poetical feeling, it awakened in me the desire to travel, to lead a new life, and so made me decide to abandon any intention of marrying Albertine, and even to break off our relations finally, also, and by the very fact of their contradictory nature, made this breach more easy. For, on the homeward journey just as much as on the other, at every station there joined us in the train or greeted us from the platform people whom we knew; the furtive pleasures of the imagination were outweighed by those other, continual pleasures of sociability which are so soothing, so soporific. Already, before the stations themselves, their names (which had suggested so many fancies to me since the day on which I first heard them, the evening on which I travelled down to Balbec with my grandmother), had

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

grown human, had lost their strangeness since the evening when Brichot, at Albertine's request, had given us a more complete account of their etymology. I had been charmed by the "flower" that ended certain names, such as Fiquefleur, Honfleur, Flers, Barfleur, Harfleur, etc., and amused by the "beef" that comes at the end of Bricquebœuf. But the flower vanished, and also the beef, when Brichot (and this he had told me on the first day in the train) informed us that *fleur* means a harbour (like *fjord*), and that *bœuf*, in Norman *budh*, means a hut. As he cited a number of examples, what had appeared to me a particular instance became general, Bricquebœuf took its place by the side of Elbeuf, and indeed in a name that was at first sight as individual as the place itself, like the name Pennedepie, in which the obscurities most impossible for the mind to elucidate seemed to me to have been amalgamated from time immemorial in a word as coarse, savoury and hard as a certain Norman cheese, I was disappointed to find the Gallic *pen* which means mountain and is as recognisable in Pennemarck as in the Apennines. As at each halt of the train I felt that we should have friendly hands to shake if not visitors to receive in our carriage, I said to Albertine: "Hurry up and ask Brichot about the names you want to know. You mentioned to me Marcouville l'Orgueilleuse." "Yes, I love that *orgueil*, it's a proud village," said Albertine. "You would find it," Brichot replied, "prouder still if, instead of turning it into French or even adopting a low Latinity, as we find in the Cartulary of the Bishop of Bayeux, *Marcouvilla superba*, you were to take the older form, more akin to the Norman, *Marculplinvilla superba*, the village, the domain of Mer-

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

culph. In almost all these names which end in *ville*, you might see still marshalled upon this coast, the phantoms of the rude Norman invaders. At Hermenonville, you had, standing by the carriage door, only our excellent Doctor, who, obviously, has nothing of the Nordic chief about him. But, by shutting your eyes, you might have seen the illustrious Herimund (*Herimundivilla*). Although I can never understand why people choose those roads, between Loigny and Balbec-Plage, rather than the very picturesque roads that lead from Loigny to old Balbec, Mme. Verdurin has perhaps taken you out that way in her carriage. If so, you have seen Incarville, or the village of Wiscar; and Tourville, before you come to Mme. Verdurin's, is the village of Turoid. And besides, there were not only the Normans. It seems that the Germans (*Alemanni*) came as far as here: Aumenancourt, *Alemanicurtis*—don't let us speak of it to that young officer I see there; he would be capable of refusing to visit his cousins there any more. There were also Saxons, as is proved by the springs of Sissonne" (the goal of one of Mme. Verdurin's favourite excursions, and quite rightly), "just as in England you have Middlesex, Wessex. And what is inexplicable, it seems that the Goths, miserable wretches as they are said to have been, came as far as this, and even the Moors, for Mortagne comes from *Mauretania*. Their trace has remained at Gourville—*Gothorunvilla*. Some vestige of the Latins subsists also, Lagny (*Latiniacum*).” “What I should like to have is an explanation of Thorpehomme,” said M. de Charlus. “I understand *homme*,” he added, at which the sculptor and Cottard exchanged significant glances. “But *Thorpe*?” “*Homme* does not in the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

least mean what you are naturally led to suppose, Baron," replied Brichot, glancing maliciously at Cottard and the sculptor. *Homme* has nothing to do, in this instance, with the sex to which I am not indebted for my mother. *Homme* is *holm* which means a small island, etc. . . . As for *Thorpe*, or village, we find that in a hundred words with which I have already bored our young friend. Thus in Thorpehomme there is not the name of a Norman chief, but words of the Norman language. You see how the whole of this country has been Germanised." "I think that is an exaggeration," said M. de Charlus. "Yesterday I was at Orgeville." "This time I give you back the man I took from you in Thorpehomme, Baron. Without wishing to be pedantic, a Charter of Robert I gives us, for Orgeville, *Otgervilla*, the domain of Otger. All these names are those of ancient lords. Octeville la Venelle is a corruption of l'Avenel. The Avenels were a family of repute in the middle ages. Bourguenolles, where Mme. Verdurin took us the other day, used to be written Bourg de Môles, for that village belonged in the eleventh century to Baudoin de Môles, as also did la Chaise-Baudoin, but here we are at Doncières." "Heavens, look at all these subalterns trying to get in," said M. de Charlus with feigned alarm. "I am thinking of you, for it doesn't affect me, I am getting out here." "You hear, Doctor?" said Brichot. "The Baron is afraid of officers passing over his body. And yet they have every right to appear here in their strength, for Doncières is precisely the same as Saint-Cyr, *Dominus Cyriacus*. There are plenty of names of towns in which *Sanctus* and *Sancta* are replaced by *Dominus* and *Domina*. Besides, this peaceful military town has sometimes a false

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

air of Saint-Cyr, of Versailles, and even of Fontainebleau."

During these homeward (as on the outward) journeys I used to tell Albertine to put on her things, for I knew very well that at Aumenancourt, Doncières, Epreville, Saint-Vast we should be receiving brief visits from friends. Nor did I at all object to these, when they took the form of (at Hermenonville—the domain of Herimund) a visit from M. de Chevreigny, seizing the opportunity, when he had come down to meet other guests, of asking me to come over to luncheon next day at Beau-soleil, or (at Doncières) the sudden irruption of one of Saint-Loup's charming friends sent by him (if he himself was not free) to convey to me an invitation from Captain de Borodino, from the officers' mess at the Cocq-Hardi, or the serjeants' at the Faisan Doré. If Saint-Loup often came in person, during the whole of the time that he was stationed there, I contrived, without attracting attention, to keep Albertine a prisoner under my own watch and ward, not that my vigilance was of any use. On one occasion however my watch was interrupted. When there was a long stop, Bloch, after greeting us, was making off at once to join his father, who, having just succeeded to his uncle's fortune, and having leased a country house by the name of La Commanderie, thought it befitting a country gentleman always to go about in a post chaise, with postilions in livery. Bloch begged me to accompany him to the carriage. "But make haste, for these quadrupeds are impatient, come, O man beloved of the gods, thou wilt give pleasure to my father." But I could not bear to leave Albertine in the train with Saint-Loup; they might, while my back was turned, get into

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

conversation, go into another compartment, smile at one another, touch one another; my eyes, glued to Albertine, could not detach themselves from her so long as Saint-Loup was there. Now I could see quite well that Bloch, who had asked me, as a favour, to go and say how d'ye do to his father, in the first place thought it not very polite of me to refuse when there was nothing to prevent me from doing so, the porters having told us that the train would remain for at least a quarter of an hour in the station, and almost all the passengers, without whom it would not start, having alighted; and, what was more, had not the least doubt that it was because quite decidedly—my conduct on this occasion furnished him with a definite proof of it—I was a snob. For he was well aware of the names of the people in whose company I was. In fact M. de Charlus had said to me, some time before this and without remembering or caring that the introduction had had been made long ago: "But you must introduce your friend to me, you are shewing a want of respect for myself," and had talked to Bloch, who had seemed to please him immensely, so much so that he had gratified him with an: "I hope to meet you again." "Then it is irrevocable, you won't walk a hundred yards to say how d'ye do to my father, who would be so pleased," Bloch said to me. I was sorry to appear to be wanting in good fellowship, and even more so for the reason for which Bloch supposed that I was wanting, and to feel that he imagined that I was not the same towards my middle class friends when I was with people of "birth." From that day he ceased to shew me the same friendly spirit and, what pained me more, had no longer the same regard for my character. But, in order

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

to undeceive him as to the motive which made me remain in the carriage, I should have had to tell him something—to wit, that I was jealous of Albertine—which would have distressed me even more than letting him suppose that I was stupidly worldly. So it is that in theory we find that we ought always to explain ourselves frankly, to avoid misunderstandings. But very often life arranges these in such a way that, in order to dispel them, in the rare circumstances in which it might be possible to do so, we must reveal either—which was not the case here—something that would annoy our friend even more than the injustice that he imputes to us, or a secret the disclosure of which—and this was my predicament—appears to us even worse than the misunderstanding. Besides, even without my explaining to Bloch, since I could not, my reason for not going with him, if I had begged him not to be angry with me, I should only have increased his anger by shewing him that I had observed it. There was nothing to be done but to bow before the decree of fate which had willed that Albertine's presence should prevent me from accompanying him, and that he should suppose that it was on the contrary the presence of people of distinction, the only effect of which, had they been a hundred times more distinguished, would have been to make me devote my attention exclusively to Bloch and reserve all my civility for him. It is sufficient that accidentally, absurdly, an incident (in this case the juxtaposition of Albertine and Saint-Loup) be interposed between two destinies whose lines have been converging towards one another, for them to deviate, stretch farther and farther apart, and never converge again. And there are friendships more precious than Bloch's for myself

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

which have been destroyed without the involuntary author of the offence having any opportunity to explain to the offended party what would no doubt have healed the injury to his self-esteem and called back his fugitive affection.

Friendships more precious than Bloch's is not, for that matter, saying very much. He had all the faults that most annoyed me. It so happened that my affection for Albertine made them altogether intolerable. Thus in that brief moment in which I was talking to him, while keeping my eye on Robert, Bloch told me that he had been to luncheon with Mme. Bontemps and that everybody had spoken about me with the warmest praise until the "decline of Helios." "Good," thought I, "as Mme. Bontemps regards Bloch as a genius, the enthusiastic support that he must have given me will do more than anything that the others can have said, it will come round to Albertine. Any day now she is bound to learn, and I am surprised that her aunt has not repeated it to her already, that I am a 'superior person.'"

"Yes," Bloch went on, "everybody sang your praises. I alone preserved a silence as profound as though I had absorbed, in place of the repast (poor, as it happened) that was set before us, poppies, dear to the blessed brother of Thanatos and Lethe, the divine Hypnos, who enwraps in pleasant bonds the body and the tongue. It is not that I admire you less than the band of hungry dogs with whom I had been bidden to feed. But I admire you because I understand you, and they admire you without understanding you. To tell the truth, I admire you too much to speak of you thus in public, it would have seemed to me a profanation to praise aloud what I carry

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

in the profoundest depths of my heart. In vain might they question me about you, a sacred Pudor, daughter of Kronion, made me remain mute." I had not the bad taste to appear annoyed, but this Pudor seemed to me akin—far more than to Kronion—to the modesty that prevents a critic who admires you from speaking of you because the secret temple in which you sit enthroned would be invaded by the mob of ignorant readers and journalists—to the modesty of the statesman who does not recommend you for a decoration because you would be lost in a crowd of people who are not your equals, to the modesty of the academician who refrains from voting for you in order to spare you the shame of being the colleague of X—who is devoid of talent, to the modesty in short, more respectable and at the same time more criminal, of the sons who implore us not to write about their dead father who abounded in merit, so that we shall not prolong his life and create a halo of glory round the poor deceased who would prefer that his name should be borne upon the lips of men to the wreaths, albeit laid there by pious hands, upon his tomb.

If Bloch, while he distressed me by his inability to understand the reason that prevented me from going to speak to his father, had exasperated me by confessing that he had depreciated me at Mme. Bontemps's (I now understood why Albertine had never made any allusion to this luncheon-party and remained silent when I spoke to her of Bloch's affection for myself), the young Israelite had produced upon M. de Charlus an impression that was quite the opposite of annoyance.

Certainly Bloch now believed not only that was I unable to remain for a second out of the company of smart

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

people, but that, jealous of the advances that they might make to him (M. de Charlus, for instance), I was trying to put a spoke in his wheel and to prevent him from making friends with them; but for his part the Baron regretted that he had not seen more of my friend. As was his habit, he took care not to betray this feeling. He began by asking me various questions about Bloch, but in so casual a tone, with an interest that seemed so assumed, that one would have thought he did not hear the answers. With an air of detachment, an intonation that expressed not merely indifference but complete distraction, and as though simply out of politeness to myself: "He looks intelligent, he said he wrote, has he any talent?" I told M. de Charlus that it had been very kind of him to say that he hoped to see Bloch again. The Baron made not the slightest sign of having heard my remark, and as I repeated it four times without eliciting a reply, I began to wonder whether I had not been the dupe of an acoustic mirage when I thought I heard M. de Charlus utter those words. "He lives at Balbec?" intoned the Baron, with an air so far from questioning that it is a nuisance that the written language does not possess a sign other than the mark of interrogation with which to end these speeches which are apparently so little interrogative. It is true that such a sign would scarcely serve for M. de Charlus. "No, they have taken a place near here, La Commanderie." Having learned what he wished to know, M. de Charlus pretended to feel a contempt for Bloch. "How appalling," he exclaimed, his voice resuming all its clarion strength. "All the places or properties called La Commanderie were built or owned by the Knights of the Order of Malta (of whom I am

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

one), as the places called Temple or Cavalerie were by the Templars. That I should live at La Commanderie would be the most natural thing in the world. But a Jew! However, I am not surprised; it comes from a curious instinct for sacrilege, peculiar to that race. As soon as a Jew has enough money to buy a place in the country he always chooses one that is called Priory, Abbey, Minster, Chantry. I had some business once with a Jewish official, guess where he lived: at Pont-l'Évêque. When he came to grief, he had himself transferred to Brittany, to Pont-l'Abbé. When they perform in Holy Week those indecent spectacles that are called "the Passion," half the audience are Jews, exulting in the thought that they are going to hang Christ a second time on the Cross, at least in effigy. At one of the Lamoureux concerts, I had a wealthy Jewish banker sitting next to me. They played the *Boyhood of Christ* by Berlioz, he was quite shocked. But he soon recovered his habitually blissful expression when he heard the Good Friday music. So your friend lives at the Commanderie, the wretch! What sadism! You shall shew me the way to it," he went on, resuming his air of indifference, "so that I may go there one day and see how our former domains endure such a profanation. It is unfortunate, for he has good manners, he seems to have been well brought up. The next thing I shall hear will be that his address in Paris is Rue du Temple!" M. de Charlus gave the impression, by these words, that he was seeking merely to find a fresh example in support of his theory; as a matter of fact he was aiming at two birds with one stone, his principal object being to find out Bloch's address. "You are quite right," put in Brichot, "the Rue du Temple used to be

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

called Rue de la Chevalerie-du-Temple. And in that connexion will you allow me to make a remark, Baron?" said the don. "What? What is it?" said M. de Charlus tartly, the proffered remark preventing him from obtaining his information. "No, it's nothing," replied Brichot in alarm. "It is with regard to the etymology of Balbec, about which they were asking me. The Rue du Temple was formerly known as the Rue Barre-du-Bac, because the Abbey of Bac in Normandy had its Bar of Justice there in Paris." M. de Charlus made no reply and looked as if he had not heard, which was one of his favourite forms of insolence. "Where does your friend live, in Paris? As three streets out of four take their name from a church or an abbey, there seems every chance of further sacrilege there. One can't prevent Jews from living in the Boulevard de la Madeleine, Faubourg Saint-Honoré or Place Saint-Augustin. So long as they do not carry their perfidy a stage farther, and pitch their tents in the Place du Parvis Notre-Dame, Quai de l'Archevêché, Rue Chanoinesse or Rue de l'Avemaria, we must make allowance for their difficulties." We could not enlighten M. de Charlus, not being aware of Bloch's address at the time. But I knew that his father's office was in the Rue des Blancs-Manteaux. "Oh! Is not that the last word in perversity?" exclaimed M. de Charlus, who appeared to find a profound satisfaction in his own cry of ironical indignation. "Rue des Blancs-Manteaux!" he repeated, dwelling with emphasis upon each syllable and laughing as he spoke. "What sacrilege! Imagine that these White Mantles polluted by M. Bloch were those of the mendicant brethren, styled Serfs of the Blessed Virgin, whom Saint Louis established there. And

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

the street has always housed some religious Order. The profanation is all the more diabolical since within a stone's-throw of the Rue des Blancs-Manteaux there is a street whose name escapes me, which is entirely conceded to the Jews, there are Hebrew characters over the shops, bakeries for unleavened bread, kosher butcheries, it is positively the Judengasse of Paris. That is where M. Bloch ought to reside. Of course," he went on in an emphatic, arrogant tone, suited to the discussion of aesthetic matters, and giving, by an unconscious strain of heredity, the air of an old musketeer of Louis XIII to his backward tilted face, "I take an interest in all that sort of thing only from the point of view of art. Politics are not in my line, and I cannot condemn wholesale, because Bloch belongs to it, a nation that numbers Spinoza among its illustrious sons. And I admire Rembrandt too much not to realise the beauty that can be derived from frequenting the synagogue. But after all a ghetto is all the finer, the more homogeneous and complete it is. You may be sure, moreover, so far are business instincts and avarice mingled in that race with sadism, that the proximity of the Hebraic street of which I was telling you, the convenience of having close at hand the fleshpots of Israel will have made your friend choose the Rue des Blancs-Manteaux. How curious it all is! It was there, by the way, that there lived a strange Jew who used to boil the Host, after which I think they boiled him, which is stranger still, since it seems to suggest that the body of a Jew can be equivalent to the Body of Our Lord. Perhaps it might be possible to arrange with your friend to take us to see the church of the White Mantles. Just think that it was there that they laid the body of Louis

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

d'Orléans after his assassination by Jean sans Peur, which unfortunately did not rid us of the Orléans. Personally, I have always been on the best of terms with my cousin the Duc de Chartres; still, after all, they are a race of usurpers who caused the assassination of Louis XVI and dethroned Charles X and Henri V. One can see where they get that from, when their ancestors include Monsieur, who was so styled doubtless because he was the most astounding old woman, and the Regent and the rest of them. What a family!" This speech, anti-Jew or pro-Hebrew—according as one regards the outward meaning of its phrases or the intentions that they concealed—had been comically interrupted for me by a remark which Morel whispered to me, to the fury of M. de Charlus. Morel, who had not failed to notice the impression that Bloch had made, murmured his thanks in my ear for having "given him the push," adding cynically: "He wanted to stay, it's all jealousy, he would like to take my place. Just like a yid!" "We might have taken advantage of this halt, which still continues, to ask your friend for some explanations of his ritual. Couldn't you fetch him back?" M. de Charlus asked me, with the anxiety of uncertainty. "No, it's impossible, he has gone away in a carriage, and besides, he is vexed with me." "Thank you, thank you," Morel breathed. "Your excuse is preposterous, one can always overtake a carriage, there is nothing to prevent your taking a motor-car," replied M. de Charlus, in the tone of a man accustomed to see everyone yield before him. But, observing my silence: "What is this more or less imaginary carriage?" he said to me insolently, and with a last ray of hope. "It is an open post chaise which must by this time have

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

reached la Commanderie." Before the impossible, M. de Charlus resigned himself and made a show of jocularity. "I can understand their recoiling from the idea of a new brougham. It might have swept them clean." At last we were warned that the train was about to start, and Saint-Loup left us. But this was the only day when by getting into our carriage he, unconsciously, caused me pain, when I thought for a moment of leaving him with Albertine in order to go with Bloch. The other times his presence did not torment me. For of her own accord Albertine, to save me from any uneasiness, would upon some pretext or other place herself in such a position that she could not even unintentionally brush against Robert, almost too far away to have to hold out her hand to him, and turning her eyes away from him would plunge, as soon as he appeared, into ostentatious and almost affected conversation with any of the other passengers, continuing this make-believe until Saint-Loup had gone. So that the visits which he paid us at Doncières, causing me no pain, no inconvenience even, were in no way discordant from the rest, all of which I found pleasing because they brought me so to speak the homage and invitation of this land. Already, as the summer drew to a close, on our journey from Balbec to Douville, when I saw in the distance the watering-place at Saint-Pierre des Ifs where, for a moment in the evening, the crest of the cliffs glittered rosy pink as the snow upon a mountain glows at sunset, it no longer recalled to my mind, I do not say the melancholy which the sight of its strange, sudden elevation had aroused in me on the first evening, when it filled me with such a longing to take the train back to Paris instead of going on to Balbec, but the spectacle that in

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the morning, Elstir had told me, might be enjoyed from there, at the hour before sunrise, when all the colours of the rainbow are refracted from the rocks, and when he had so often wakened the little boy who had served him, one year, as model, to paint him, nude, upon the sands. The name Saint-Pierre des Ifs announced to me merely that there would presently appear a strange, intelligent, painted man of fifty with whom I should be able to talk about Chateaubriand and Balzac. And now in the mists of evening, behind that cliff of Incarville, which had filled my mind with so many dreams, in the past, what I saw, as though its old sandstone wall had become transparent, was the comfortable house of an uncle of M. de Cambremer in which I knew that I should always find a warm welcome if I did not wish to dine at la Raspelière or to return to Balbec. So that it was not merely the place-names of this district that had lost their initial mystery, but the places themselves. The names, already half-stripped of a mystery which etymology had replaced by reason, had now come down a stage farther still. On our homeward journeys, at Hermenonville, at Incarville, at Harambouville, as the train came to a standstill, we could make out shadowy forms which we did not at first identify, and which Brichot, who could see nothing at all, might perhaps have mistaken in the darkness for the phantoms of Herimund, Wiscar and Herimbald. But they came up to our carriage. It was merely M. de Cambremer, now completely out of touch with the Verdurins, who had come to see off his own guests and, as ambassador for his wife and mother, came to ask me whether I would not let him "carry me off" to keep me for a few days at Féterne where I should find successively a lady

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

of great musical talent, who would sing me the whole of Gluck, and a famous chess-player, with whom I could have some splendid games, which would not interfere with the fishing expeditions and yachting trips on the bay, nor even with the Verdurin dinner-parties, for which the Marquis gave me his word of honour that he would "lend" me, sending me there and fetching me back again, for my greater convenience and also to make sure of my returning. "But I cannot believe that it is good for you to go so high up. I know my sister could never stand it. She would come back in a fine state! She is not at all well just now. Indeed, you have been as bad as that! To-morrow you won't be able to stand up!" And he shook with laughter, not from malevolence but for the same reason which made him laugh whenever he saw a lame man hobbling along the street, or had to talk to a deaf person. "And before this? What, you haven't had an attack for a fortnight. Do you know, that is simply marvellous. Really, you ought to come and stay at Féterne, you could talk about your attacks to my sister." At Incarville it was the Marquis de Montpeyroux who, not having been able to go to Féterne, for he had been away shooting, had come "to meet the train" in top boots, with a pheasant's feather in his hat, to shake hands with the departing guests and at the same time with myself, bidding me expect, on the day of the week that would be most convenient to me, a visit from his son, whom he thanked me for inviting, adding that he would be very glad if I would make the boy read a little; or else M. de Crécy, come out to digest his dinner, he explained, smoking his pipe, accepting a cigar or indeed more than one, and saying to me: "Well, you haven't

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

named a day for our next Lucullus evening? We have nothing to discuss? Allow me to remind you that we left unsettled the question of the two families of Montgomery. We really must settle it. I am relying upon you." Others had come simply to buy newspapers. And many others came and chatted with us who, I have often suspected, were to be found upon the platform of the station nearest to their little mansion simply because they had nothing better to do than to converse for a moment with people of their acquaintance. A scene of social existence like any other, in fact, these halts on the little railway. The train itself appeared conscious of the part that had devolved upon it, had contracted a sort of human kindness; patient, of a docile nature, it waited as long as they pleased for the stragglers, and even after it had started would stop to pick up those who signalled to it; they would then run after it panting, in which they resembled itself, but differed from it in that they were running to overtake it at full speed whereas it employed only a wise slowness. And so Hermenonville, Harambouville, Incarville no longer suggested to me even the rugged grandeurs of the Norman Conquest, not content with having entirely rid themselves of the unaccountable melancholy in which I had seen them steeped long ago in the moist evening air. Doncières! To me, even after I had come to know it and had awakened from my dream, how much had long survived in that name of pleasantly glacial streets, lighted windows, succulent flesh of birds. Doncières! Now it was nothing more than the station at which Morel joined the train, Egleville (*Aquilae villa*) that at which we generally found waiting for us Princess Sherbatoff, Maineville, the station at which Albertine left the train

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

on fine evenings, when, if she was not too tired, she felt inclined to enjoy a moment more of my company, having, if she took a footpath, little if any farther to walk than if she had alighted at Parville (*Paterni villa*). Not only did I no longer feel the anxious dread of isolation which had gripped my heart the first evening, I had no longer any need to fear its reawakening, nor to feel myself a stranger or alone in this land productive not only of chestnut trees and tamarisks, but of friendships which from beginning to end of the journey formed a long chain, interrupted like that of the blue hills, hidden here and there in the anfractuosity of the rock or behind the lime trees of the avenue, but delegating at each stage an amiable gentleman who came to interrupt my course with a cordial handclasp, to prevent me from feeling it too long, to offer if need be to continue the journey with me. Another would be at the next station, so that the whistle of the little tram parted us from one friend only to enable us to meet others. Between the most isolated properties and the railway which skirted them almost at the pace of a person who is walking fast, the distance was so slight that at the moment when, from the platform, outside the waiting-room, their owners hailed us, we might almost have imagined that they were doing so from their own doorstep, from their bedroom window, as though the little departmental line had been merely a street in a country town and the isolated mansion-house the town residence of a family; and even at the few stations where no "good evening" sounded, the silence had a nourishing and calming fulness, because I knew that it was formed from the slumber of friends who had gone to bed early in the neighbouring manor, where my arrival would have

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

been greeted with joy if I had been obliged to arouse them to ask for some hospitable office. Not to mention that a sense of familiarity so fills up our time that we have not, after a few months, a free moment in a town where on our first arrival the day offered us the absolute disposal of all its twelve hours, if one of these had by any chance fallen vacant, it would no longer have occurred to me to devote it to visiting some church for the sake of which I had come to Balbec in the past, nor even to compare a scene painted by Elstir with the sketch that I had seen of it in his studio, but rather to go and play one more game of chess at M. Féré's. It was indeed the degrading influence, as it was also the charm that this country round Balbec had had, that it should become for me in the true sense a friendly country; if its territorial distribution, its sowing, along the whole extent of the coast, with different forms of cultivation, gave of necessity to the visits which I paid to these different friends the form of a journey, they also reduced that journey to nothing more than the social amusement of a series of visits. The same place-names, so disturbing to me in the past that the mere Country House Year Book, when I turned over the chapter devoted to the Department of the Manche, caused me as keen an emotion as the railway time-table, had become so familiar to me that, in the time-table itself, I could have consulted the page headed: *Balbec to Douville via Doncières*, with the same happy tranquility as a directory of addresses. In this too social valley, along the sides of which I felt assembled, whether visible or not, a numerous company of friends, the poetical cry of the evening was no longer that of the owl or frog, but the "How goes it?" of M. de Criquepot or the

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

"Chaire!" of Brichot. Its atmosphere no longer aroused any anguish, and, charged with effluvia that were purely human, was easily breathable, indeed unduly soothing. The benefit that I did at least derive from it was that of looking at things only from a practical point of view. The idea of marrying Albertine appeared to me to be madness.

CHAPTER IV

Sudden revulsion in favour of Albertine. Agony at sunrise. I set off at once with Albertine for Paris.

I WAS only waiting for an opportunity for a final rupture. And, one evening, as Mamma was starting next day for Combray, where she was to attend the death-bed of one of her mother's sisters, leaving me behind so that I might get the benefit, as my grandmother would have wished, of the sea air, I had announced to her that I had irrevocably decided not to marry Albertine and would very soon stop seeing her. I was glad to have been able, by these words, to give some satisfaction to my mother on the eve of her departure. She had not concealed from me that this satisfaction was indeed extreme. I had also to come to an understanding with Albertine. As I was on my way back with her from la Raspelière, the faithful having alighted, some at Saint-Mars le Vêtu, others at Saint-Pierre des Ifs, others again at Doncières, feeling particularly happy and detached from her, I had decided, now that there were only our two selves in the carriage, to embark at length upon this subject. The truth, as a matter of fact, is that the girl of the Balbec company whom I really loved, albeit she was absent at that moment, as were the rest of her friends, but who was coming back there (I enjoyed myself with them all, because each of them had for me, as on the day when I first saw them, something of the essential quality of all the rest, as though they belonged to a race apart), was Andrée. Since she was coming back again, in a few days' time, to Balbec, it was certain that she would at once pay me a visit, and

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

then, to be left free not to marry her if I did not wish to do so, to be able to go to Venice, but at the same time to have her, while she was at Balbec, entirely to myself, the plan that I would adopt would be that of not seeming at all eager to come to her, and as soon as she arrived, when we were talking together, I would say to her: "What a pity it is that I didn't see you a few weeks earlier. I should have fallen in love with you; now my heart is bespoken. But that makes no difference, we shall see one another frequently, for I am unhappy about my other love, and you will help to console me." I smiled inwardly as I thought of this conversation, by this strategem I should be giving Andrée the impression that I was not really in love with her; and so she would not grow tired of me and I should take a joyful and pleasant advantage of her affection. But all this only made it all the more necessary that I should at length speak seriously to Albertine, so as not to behave indelicately, and, since I had decided to consecrate myself to her friend, she herself must be given clearly to understand that I was not in love with her. I must tell her so at once, as Andrée might arrive any day. But as we were getting near Parville, I felt that we should not have time that evening and that it was better to put off until the morrow what was now irrevocably settled. I confined myself, therefore, to discussing with her our dinner that evening at the Verdurins'. As she put on her cloak, the train having just left Incarville, the last station before Parville, she said to me: "To-morrow then, more Verdurin, you won't forget that you are coming to call for me." I could not help answering rather sharply: "Yes, that is if I don't 'fail' them, for I am beginning to find this sort of life really

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

stupid. In any case, if we go there, so that my time at la Raspelière may not be absolutely wasted, I must remember to ask Mme. Verdurin about something that may prove of great interest to myself, provide me with a subject for study, and give me pleasure as well, for I have really had very little this year at Balbec." "You are not very polite to me, but I forgive you, because I can see that your nerves are bad. What is this pleasure?" "That Mme. Verdurin should let me hear some things by a musician whose work she knows very well. I know one of his things myself, but it seems there are others and I should like to know if the rest of his work is printed, if it is different from what I know." "What musician?" "My dear child, when I have told you that his name is Vinteuil, will you be any the wiser?" We may have revolved every possible idea in our minds, and yet the truth has never occurred to us, and it is from without, when we are least expecting it, that it gives us its cruel stab and wounds us for all time. "You can't think how you amuse me," replied Albertine as she rose, for the train was slowing down. "Not only does it mean a great deal more to me than you suppose, but even without Mme. Verdurin I can get you all the information that you require. You remember my telling you about a friend older than myself, who has been a mother, a sister to me, with whom I spent the happiest years of my life at Trieste, and whom for that matter I am expecting to join in a few weeks at Cherbourg, when we shall start on our travels together (it sounds a little odd, but you know how I love the sea), very well, this friend (oh! not at all the type of woman you might suppose!), isn't this extraordinary, she is the dearest and most intimate friend of your

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Vinteuil's daughter, and I know Vinteuil's daughter almost as well as I know her. I always call them my two big sisters. I am not sorry to let you see that your little Albertine can be of use to you in this question of music, about which you say, and quite rightly for that matter, that I know nothing at all." At the sound of these words, uttered as we were entering the station of Parville, so far from Combray and Montjouvain, so long after the death of Vinteuil, an image stirred in my heart, an image which I had kept in reserve for so many years that even if I had been able to guess, when I stored it up, long ago, that it had a noxious power, I should have supposed that in the course of time it had entirely lost it; preserved alive in the depths of my being—like Orestes whose death the gods had prevented in order that, on the appointed day, he might return to his native land to punish the murderer of Agamemnon—as a punishment, as a retribution (who can tell?) for my having allowed my grandmother to die, perhaps; rising up suddenly from the black night in which it seemed for ever buried, and striking, like an Avenger, in order to inaugurate for me a novel, terrible and merited existence, perhaps also to making dazzlingly clear to my eyes the fatal consequences which evil actions indefinitely engender, not only for those who have committed them, but for those who have done no more, have thought that they were doing no more than look on at a curious and entertaining spectacle, like myself, alas, on that afternoon long ago at Montjouvain, concealed behind a bush where (as when I complacently listened to an account of Swann's love affairs), I had perilously allowed to expand within myself the fatal road, destined to cause me suffering, of Knowledge. And at the same time, from my

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

bitterest grief I derived a sentiment almost of pride, almost joyful, that of a man whom the shock he has just received has carried at a bound to a point to which no voluntary effort could have brought him. Albertine the friend of Mlle. Vinteuil and of her friend, a practising and professional Sapphist, was, compared to what I had imagined when I doubted her most, as are, compared to the little acousticon of the 1889 Exhibition with which one barely hoped to be able to transmit sound from end to end of a house, the telephones that soar over streets, cities, fields, seas, uniting one country to another. It was a terrible terra incognita this on which I had just landed, a fresh phase of undreamed-of sufferings that was opening before me. And yet this deluge of reality that engulfs us, if it is enormous compared with our timid and microscopic suppositions, was anticipated by them. It was doubtless something akin to what I had just learned, something akin to Albertine's friendship with Mlle. Vinteuil, something which my mind would never have been capable of inventing, but which I obscurely apprehended when I became uneasy at the sight of Albertine and Andrée together. It is often simply from want of the creative spirit that we do not go to the full extent of suffering. And the most terrible reality brings us, with our suffering, the joy of a great discovery, because it merely gives a new and clear form to what we have long been ruminating without suspecting it. The train had stopped at Parville, and, as we were the only passengers in it, it was in a voice lowered by a sense of the futility of his task, by the force of habit which nevertheless made him perform it, and inspired in him simultaneously exactitude and indolence, and even more by a longing for

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

sleep, that the porter shouted: "Parville!" Albertine, who stood facing me, seeing that she had arrived at her destination stepped across the compartment in which we were and opened the door. But this movement which she was making to alight tore my heart unendurably, just as if, notwithstanding the position independent of my body which Albertine's body seemed to be occupying a yard away from it, this separation in space, which an accurate draughtsman would have been obliged to indicate between us, was only apparent, and anyone who wished to make a fresh drawing of things as they really were would now have had to place Albertine, not at a certain distance from me, but inside me. She distressed me so much by her withdrawal that, overtaking her, I caught her desperately by the arm. "Would it be materially impossible," I asked her, "for you to come and spend the night at Balbec?" "Materially, no. But I'm dropping with sleep." "You would be doing me an immense service. . . ." "Very well, then, though I don't in the least understand; why didn't you tell me sooner? I'll come, though." My mother was asleep when, after engaging a room for Albertine on a different floor, I entered my own. I sat down by the window, suppressing my sobs, so that my mother, who was separated from me only by a thin partition, might not hear me. I had not even remembered to close the shutters, for at one moment, raising my eyes, I saw facing me in the sky that same faint glow as of a dying fire which one saw in the restaurant at Rivebelle in a study that Elstir had made of a sunset effect. I remembered how thrilled I had been when I had seen from the railway on the day of my first arrival at Balbec, this same image of an evening which

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

preceded not the night but a new day. But no day now would be new to me any more, would arouse in me the desire for an unknown happiness; it would only prolong my sufferings, until the point when I should no longer have the strength to endure them. The truth of what Cottard had said to me in the casino at Parville was now confirmed beyond a shadow of doubt. What I had long dreaded, vaguely suspected of Albertine, what my instinct deduced from her whole personality and my reason controlled by my desire had gradually made me deny, was true! Behind Albertine I no longer saw the blue mountains of the sea, but the room at Montjouvain where she was falling into the arms of Mlle. Vinteuil with that laugh in which she gave utterance to the strange sound of her enjoyment. For, with a girl as pretty as Albertine, was it possible that Mlle. Vinteuil, having the desires she had, had not asked her to gratify them? And the proof that Albertine had not been shocked by the request but had consented, was that they had not quarrelled, indeed their intimacy had steadily increased. And that graceful movement with which Albertine laid her chin upon Rosemonde's shoulder, gazed at her smilingly, and deposited a kiss upon her throat, that movement which had reminded me of Mlle. Vinteuil, in interpreting which I had nevertheless hesitated to admit that an identical line traced by a gesture must of necessity be due to an identical inclination, for all that I knew, Albertine might simply have learned it from Mlle. Vinteuil. Gradually, the lifeless sky took fire. I who until then had never awakened without a smile at the humblest things, the bowl of coffee and milk, the sound of the rain, the thunder of the wind, felt that the day which in a moment was to

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

dawn, and all the days to come would never bring me any more the hope of an unknown happiness, but only the prolongation of my martyrdom. I clung still to life; I knew that I had nothing now that was not cruel to expect from it. I ran to the lift, regardless of the hour, to ring for the lift-boy who acted as night watchman, and asked him to go to Albertine's room, and to tell her that I had something of importance to say to her, if she could see me there. "Mademoiselle says she would rather come to you," was his answer. "She will be here in a moment." And presently, sure enough, in came Albertine in her dressing-gown. "Albertine," I said to her in a whisper, warning her not to raise her voice so as not to arouse my mother, from whom we were separated only by that partition whose thinness, to-day a nuisance, because it confined us to whispers, resembled in the past, when it so clearly expressed my grandmother's intentions, a sort of musical transparency, "I am ashamed to have disturbed you. Listen. To make you understand, I must tell you something which you do not know. When I came here, I left a woman whom I ought to have married, who was ready to sacrifice everything for me. She was to start on a journey this morning, and every day for the last week I have been wondering whether I should have the courage not to telegraph to her that I was coming back. I have had that courage, but it made me so wretched that I thought I would kill myself. That is why I asked you last night if you could not come and sleep at Balbec. If I had to die, I should have liked to bid you farewell." And I gave free vent to the tears which my fiction rendered natural. "My poor boy, if I had only known, I should have spent the night beside

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

you," cried Albertine, to whom the idea that I might perhaps marry this woman, and that her own chance of making a "good marriage" was thus vanishing, never even occurred, so sincerely was she moved by a grief the cause of which I was able to conceal from her, but not its reality and strength. "Besides," she told me, "last night, all the time we were coming from la Raspelière, I could see that you were nervous and unhappy, I was afraid there must be something wrong." As a matter of fact my grief had begun only at Parville, and my nervous trouble, which was very different but which fortunately Albertine identified with it, arose from the boredom of having to spend a few more days in her company. She added: "I shan't leave you any more, I am going to spend all my time here." She was offering me, in fact—and she alone could offer me—the sole remedy for the poison that was burning me, a remedy akin, as it happened, to the poison, for, though one was sweet, the other bitter, both were alike derived from Albertine. At that moment, Albertine—my malady—ceasing to cause me to suffer, left me—she, Albertine the remedy—as weak as a convalescent. But I reflected that she would presently be leaving Balbec for Cherbourg, and from there going to Trieste. Her old habits would be reviving. What I wished above all things was to prevent Albertine from taking the boat, to make an attempt to carry her off to Paris. It was true that from Paris, more easily even than from Balbec, she might, if she wished, go to Trieste, but at Paris we should see; perhaps I might ask Mme. de Guermantes to exert her influence indirectly upon Mlle. Vinteuil's friend so that she should not remain at Trieste, to make her accept a situation elsewhere, perhaps with

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the Prince de —, whom I had met at Mme. de Villeparisis's and, indeed, at Mme. de Guermantes's. And he, even if Albertine wished to go to his house to see her friend, might, warned by Mme. de Guermantes, prevent them from meeting. Of course I might have reminded myself that in Paris, if Albertine had those tastes, she would find many other people with whom to gratify them. But every impulse of jealousy is individual and bears the imprint of the creature—in this instance Mlle. Vinteuil's friend—who has aroused it. It was Mlle. Vinteuil's friend who remained my chief *préoccupation*. The mysterious passion with which I had thought in the past about Austria because it was the country from which Albertine came (her uncle had been a Counsellor of Embassy there), because its geographical peculiarities, the race that inhabited it, its historical buildings, its scenery, I could study, as in an atlas, as in an album of photographs, in Albertine's smile, her ways; this mysterious passion I still felt but, by an inversion of symbols, in the realm of horror. Yes, it was from there that Albertine came. It was there that, in every house, she could be sure of finding, if not Mlle. Vinteuil's friend, others of the sort. The habits of her childhood would revive, they would be meeting in three months' time for Christmas, then for the New Year, dates which were already painful to me in themselves, owing to an instinctive memory of the misery that I had felt on those days when, long ago, they separated me, for the whole of the Christmas holidays, from Gilberte. After the long dinner-parties, after the midnight revels, when everybody was joyous, animated, Albertine would adopt the same attitudes with her friends there that I had seen her adopt

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

with Andrée, albeit her friendship for Andrée was innocent, the same attitudes, possibly, that I had seen Mlle. Vinteuil adopt, pursued by her friend, at Montjouvain. To Mlle. Vinteuil, while her friend titillated her desires before subsiding upon her, I now gave the inflamed face of Albertine, of an Albertine whom I heard utter as she fled, then as she surrendered herself, her strange, deep laugh. What, in comparison with the anguish that I was now feeling, was the jealousy that I might have felt on the day when Saint-Loup had met Albertine with myself at Doncières and she had made teasing overtures to him, or that I had felt when I thought of the unknown initiator to whom I was indebted for the first kisses that she had given me in Paris, on the day when I was waiting for a letter from Mlle. de Stermaria? That other kind of jealousy provoked by Saint-Loup, by a young man of any sort, was nothing. I should have had at the most in that case to fear a rival over whom I should have attempted to prevail. But here the rival was not similar to myself, bore different weapons, I could not compete upon the same ground, give Albertine the same pleasures, nor indeed conceive what those pleasures might be. In many moments of our life, we would barter the whole of our future for a power that in itself is insignificant. I would at one time have foregone all the good things in life to make the acquaintance of Mme. Blatin, because she was a friend of Mme. Swann. To-day, in order that Albertine might not go to Trieste, I would have endured every possible torment, and if that proved insufficient, would have inflicted torments upon her, would have isolated her, kept her under lock and key, would have taken from her the little money that she had so that it

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

should be materially impossible for her to make the journey. Just as long ago, when I was anxious to go to Balbec, what urged me to start was the longing for a Persian church, for a stormy sea at daybreak, so what was now rending my heart as I thought that Albertine might perhaps be going to Trieste, was that she would be spending the night of Christmas there with Mlle. Vin-teuil's friend: for imagination, when it changes its nature and turns to sensibility, does not for that reason acquire control of a larger number of simultaneous images. Had anyone told me that she was not at that moment either at Cherbourg or at Trieste, that there was no possibility of her seeing Albertine, how I should have wept for joy. How my whole life and its future would have been changed! And yet I knew quite well that this localisation of my jealousy was arbitrary, that if Albertine had these desires, she could gratify them with other girls. And perhaps even these very girls, if they could have seen her elsewhere, would not have tortured my heart so acutely. It was Trieste, it was that unknown world in which I could feel that Albertine took a delight, in which were her memories, her friendships, her childish loves, that exhaled that hostile, inexplicable atmosphere, like the atmosphere that used to float up to my bedroom at Combray, from the dining-room in which I could hear talking and laughing with strangers, amid the clatter of knives and forks, Mamma who would not be coming upstairs to say good-night to me; like the atmosphere that had filled for Swann the houses to which Odette went at night in search of inconceivable joys. It was no longer as of a delicious place in which the people were pensive, the sunsets golden, the church bells melancholy, that I

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

thought now of Trieste, but as of an accursed city which I should have liked to see go up in flames, and to eliminate from the world of real things. That city was embedded in my heart as a fixed and permanent point. The thought of letting Albertine start presently for Cherbourg and Trieste filled me with horror; as did even that of remaining at Balbec. For now that the revelation of my mistress's intimacy with Mlle. Vinteuil became almost a certainty, it seemed to me that at every moment when Albertine was not with me (and there were whole days on which, because of her aunt, I was unable to see her), she was giving herself to Bloch's sister and cousin, possibly to other girls as well. The thought that that very evening she might be seeing the Bloch girls drove me mad. And so, after she had told me that for the next few days she would stay with me all the time, I replied: "But the fact is, I want to go back to Paris. Won't you come with me? And wouldn't you like to come and stay with us for a while in Paris?" At all costs I must prevent her from being by herself, for some days at any rate, I must keep her with me, so as to be certain that she could not meet Mlle. Vinteuil's friend. She would as a matter of fact be alone in the house with myself, for my mother, taking the opportunity of a tour of inspection which my father had to make, had taken it upon herself as a duty, in obedience to my grandmother's wishes, to go down to Combray and spend a few days there with one of my grandmother's sisters. Mamma had no love for her aunt, because she had not been to my grandmother, who was so loving to her, what a sister should be. So, when they grow up, children remember with resentment the people who have been unkind to them. But Mamma,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

having become my grandmother, was incapable of resentment; her mother's life was to her like a pure and innocent childhood from which she would extract those memories whose sweetness or bitterness regulated her actions towards other people. Our aunt might have been able to furnish Mamma with certain priceless details, but now she would have difficulty in obtaining them, her aunt being seriously ill (they spoke of cancer), and she reproached herself for not having gone sooner, to keep my father company, found only an additional reason for doing what her mother would have done, just as she went on the anniversary of the death of my grandmother's father, who had been such a bad parent, to lay upon his grave the flowers which my grandmother had been in the habit of taking there. And so, to the side of the grave which was about to open, my mother wished to convey the kind words which my aunt had not come to offer to my grandmother. While she was at Combray, my mother would busy herself with certain things which my grandmother had always wished to be done, but only if they were done under her daughter's supervision. So that they had never yet been begun, Mamma not wishing, by leaving Paris before my father, to make him feel too keenly the burden of a grief in which he shared, but which could not afflict him as it afflicted her. "Ah! That wouldn't be possible just at present," Albertine assured me. "Besides, why should you need to go back to Paris so soon, if the lady has gone?" "Because I shall feel more at my ease in a place where I have known her than at Balbec, which she has never seen and which I have begun to loathe." Did Albertine realise later on that this other woman had never existed, and that if that night I had

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

really longed for death, it was because she had stupidly revealed to me that she had been on intimate terms with Mlle. Vinteuil's friend? It is possible. There are moments when it appears to me probable. Anyhow, that morning, she believed in the existence of this other woman. "But you ought to marry this lady," she told me, "my dear boy, it would make you happy, and I'm sure it would make her happy as well." I replied that the thought that I might be making the other woman happy had almost made me decide; when, not long since, I had inherited a fortune which would enable me to provide my wife with ample luxury and pleasures, I had been on the point of accepting the sacrifice of her whom I loved. Intoxicated by the gratitude that I felt for Albertine's kindness, coming so soon after the atrocious suffering that she had caused me, just as one would think nothing of promising a fortune to the waiter who pours one out a sixth glass of brandy, I told her that my wife would have a motor-car, a yacht, that from that point of view, since Albertine was so fond of motoring and yachting, it was unfortunate that she was not the woman I loved, that I should have been the perfect husband for her, but that we should see, we should no doubt be able to meet on friendly terms. After all, as even when we are drunk we refrain from addressing the passers-by, for fear of blows, I was not guilty of the imprudence (if such it was) that I should have committed in Gilberte's time, of telling her that it was she, Albertine, whom I loved. "You see, I came very near to marrying her. But I did not dare do it, after all, I should not like to make a young woman live with anyone so sickly and troublesome as myself." "But you must be mad, any-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

body would be delighted to live with you, just look how people run after you. They're always talking about you at Mme. Verdurin's, and in high society too, I'm told. She can't have been at all nice to you, that lady, to make you lose confidence in yourself like that. I can see what she is, she's a wicked woman, I detest her. I'm sure, if I were in her shoes!" "Not at all, she is very kind, far too kind. As for the Verdurins and all that, I don't care a hang. Apart from the woman I love, whom moreover I have given up, I care only for my little Albertine, she is the only person in the world who, by letting me see a great deal of her—that is, during the first few days," I added, in order not to alarm her and to be able to ask anything of her during those days, "—can bring me a little consolation." I made only a vague allusion to the possibility of marriage, adding that it was quite impracticable since we should never agree. Being, in spite of myself, still pursued in my jealousy by the memory of Saint-Loup's relations with "Rachel, when from the Lord," and of Swann's with Odette, I was too much inclined to believe that, from the moment that I was in love, I could not be loved in return, and that pecuniary interest alone could attach a woman to me. No doubt it was foolish to judge Albertine by Odette and Rachel. But it was not she; it was myself; it was the sentiments that I was capable of inspiring that my jealousy made me underestimate. And from this judgment, possibly erroneous, sprang no doubt many of the calamities that were to overwhelm us. "Then you decline my invitation to Paris?" "My aunt would not like me to leave just at present. Besides, even if I can come, later on, wouldn't it look rather odd, my staying with you like

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

that? In Paris everybody will know that I'm not your cousin." "Very well, then. We can say that we're practically engaged. It can't make any difference, since you know that it isn't true." Albertine's throat which emerged bodily from her nightgown, was strongly built, sunburned, of coarse grain. I kissed her as purely as if I had been kissing my mother to charm away a childish grief which as a child I did not believe that I would ever be able to eradicate from my heart. Albertine left me, in order to go and dress. Already, her devotion was beginning to falter; a moment ago she had told me that she would not leave me for a second. (And I felt sure that her resolution would not last long, since I was afraid, if we remained at Balbec, that she would that very evening, in my absence, be seeing the Bloch girls.) Now, she had just told me that she wished to call at Maineville and that she would come back and see me in the afternoon. She had not looked in there the evening before, there might be letters lying there for her, besides, her aunt might be anxious about her. I had replied: "If that is all, we can send the lift-boy to tell your aunt that you are here and to call for your letters." And, anxious to shew herself obliging but annoyed at being tied down, she had wrinkled her brow, then, at once, very sweetly, said: "All right" and had sent the lift-boy. Albertine had not been out of the room a moment before the boy came and tapped gently on my door. I had not realised that, while I was talking to Albertine, he had had time to go to Maineville and return. He came now to tell me that Albertine had written a note to her aunt and that she could, if I wished, come to Paris that day. It was unfortunate that she had given him this message orally, for

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

already, despite the early hour, the manager was about, and came to me in a great state to ask me whether there was anything wrong, whether I was really leaving; whether I could not stay just a few days longer, the wind that day being rather "tiring" (trying). I did not wish to explain to him that the one thing that mattered to me was that Albertine should have left Balbec before the hour at which the Bloch girls took the air, especially since Andrée, who alone might have protected her, was not there, and that Balbec was like one of those places in which a sick man who has difficulty in breathing is determined, should he die on the journey, not to spend another night. I should have to struggle against similar entreaties, in the hotel first of all, where the eyes of Marie Gineste and Céleste Albaret were red. (Marie, moreover, was giving vent to the swift sob of a mountain torrent. Céleste, who was gentler, urged her to keep calm; but, Marie having murmured the only poetry that she knew: "Down here the lilacs die," Céleste could contain herself no longer, and a flood of tears spilled over her lilac-hued face; I dare say they had forgotten my existence by that evening.) After which, on the little local railway, despite all my precautions against being seen, I met M. de Cambremer who, at the sight of my boxes, turned pale, for he was counting upon me for the day after the next; he infuriated me by trying to persuade me that my choking fits were caused by the change in the weather, and that October would do them all the good in the world, and asked me whether I could not "postpone my departure by a week," an expression the fatuity of which enraged me perhaps only because what he was suggesting to me made me feel ill. And while he talked

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

to me in the railway carriage, at each station I was afraid of seeing, more terrible than Heribald or Guiscard, M. de Crécy imploring me to invite him, or, more dreadful still, Mme. Verdurin bent upon inviting me. But this was not to happen for some hours. I had not got there yet. I had to face only the despairing entreaties of the manager. I shut the door on him, for I was afraid that, although he lowered his voice, he would end by disturbing Mamma. I remained alone in my room, that room with the too lofty ceiling in which I had been so wretched on my first arrival, in which I had thought with such longing of Mlle. de Stermaria, had watched for the appearance of Albertine and her friends, like migratory birds alighting upon the beach, in which I had enjoyed her with so little enjoyment after I had sent the lift-boy to fetch her, in which I had experienced my grandmother's kindness, then realised that she was dead; those shutters at the foot of which the morning light fell, I had opened the first time to look out upon the first ramparts of the sea (those shutters which Albertine made me close in case anybody should see us kissing). I became aware of my own transformations as I compared them with the identity of my surroundings. We grow accustomed to these as to people and when, all of a sudden, we recall the different meaning that they used to convey to us, then, after they had lost all meaning, the events very different from those of to-day which they enshrined, the diversity of actions performed beneath the same ceiling, between the same glazed bookshelves, the change in our heart and in our life that diversity implies, seem to be increased still further by the unalterable permanence of the setting, reinforced by the unity of scene.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Two or three times it occurred to me, for a moment, that the world in which this room and these bookshelves were situated and in which Albertine counted for so little, was perhaps an intellectual world, which was the sole reality, and my grief something like what we feel when we read a novel, a thing of which only a madman would make a lasting and permanent grief that prolonged itself through his life; that a tiny movement of my will would suffice, perhaps, to attain to that real world, to re-enter it, passing through my grief, as one breaks through a paper hoop, and to think no more about what Albertine had done than we think about the actions of the imaginary heroine of a novel after we have finished reading it. For that matter, the mistresses whom I have loved most passionately have never coincided with my love for them. That love was genuine, since I subordinated everything else to the need of seeing them, of keeping them to myself, and would weep aloud if, one evening, I had waited for them in vain. But it was more because they had the faculty of arousing that love, of raising it to a paroxysm, than because they were its image. When I saw them, when I heard their voices, I could find nothing in them which resembled my love and could account for it. And yet my sole joy lay in seeing them, my sole anxiety in waiting for them to come. One would have said that a virtue that had no connexion with them had been attached to them artificially by nature, and that this virtue, this quasi-electric power had the effect upon me of exciting my love, that is to say of controlling all my actions and causing all my sufferings. But from this, the beauty, or the intelligence, or the kindness of these women was entirely distinct. As by an electric current that

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

gives us a shock, I have been shaken by my love affairs, I have lived them, I have felt them: never have I succeeded in arriving at the stage of seeing or thinking them. Indeed I am inclined to believe that in these love affairs (I leave out of account the physical pleasure which is their habitual accompaniment but is not enough in itself to constitute them), beneath the form of the woman, it is to those invisible forces which are attached to her that we address ourselves as to obscure deities. It is they whose goodwill is necessary to us, with whom we seek to establish contact without finding any positive pleasure in it. With these goddesses, the woman, during our assignation with her, puts us in touch and does little more. We have, by way of oblation, promised jewels, travels, uttered formulas which mean that we adore and, at the same time, formulas which mean that we are indifferent. We have used all our power to obtain a fresh assignation, but on condition that no trouble is involved. Now would the woman herself, if she were not completed by these occult forces, make us give ourselves so much trouble, when, once she has left us, we are unable to say how she was dressed and realise that we never even looked at her?

As our vision is a deceiving sense, a human body, even when it is loved as Albertine's was, seems to us to be at a few yards', at a few inches' distance from us. And similarly with the soul that inhabits it. But something need only effect a violent change in the relative position of that soul to ourself, to shew us that she is in love with others and not with us, then by the beating of our dislocated heart we feel that it is not a yard away from us but within us that the beloved creature was. Within us, in regions more or less superficial. But the words:

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

"That friend is Mlle. Vinteuil" had been the *Open, sesame* which I should have been incapable of discovering by myself, which had made Albertine penetrate to the depths of my shattered heart. And the door that had closed behind her, I might seek for a hundred years without learning how it might be opened.

I had ceased for a moment to hear these words ringing in my ears while Albertine was with me just now. While I was kissing her, as I used to kiss my mother, at Combray, to calm my anguish, I believed almost in Albertine's innocence, or at least did not think continuously of the discovery that I had made of her vice. But now that I was alone the words began to sound afresh like those noises inside the ear which we hear as soon as the other person stops talking. Her vice now seemed to me to be beyond any doubt. The light of the approaching sunrise, by altering the appearance of the things round me, made me once again, as though it shifted my position for a moment, and even more painfully conscious of my suffering. I had never seen the dawn of so beautiful or so painful a morning. And thinking of all the nondescript scenes that were about to be lighted up, scenes which, only yesterday, would have filled me simply with the desire to visit them, I could not repress a sob when, with a gesture of oblation mechanically performed which appeared to me to symbolise the bloody sacrifice which I should have to make of all joy, every morning, until the end of my life, a solemn renewal, celebrated as each day dawned, of my daily grief and of the blood from my wound, the golden egg of the sun, as though propelled by the breach of equilibrium brought about at the moment of coagulation by a change of density, barbed with

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

tongues of flame as in a painting, came leaping through the curtain behind which one had felt that it was quivering with impatience, ready to appear on the scene and to spring aloft, the mysterious, ingrained purple of which it flooded with waves of light. I heard the sound of my weeping. But at that moment, to my astonishment, the door opened and, with a throbbing heart, I seemed to see my grandmother standing before me, as in one of those apparitions that had already visited me, but only in my sleep. Was all this but a dream, then? Alas, I was wide awake. "You see a likeness to your poor grandmother," said Mamma, for it was she, speaking gently to calm my fear, admitting moreover the resemblance, with a fine smile of modest pride which had always been innocent of coquetry. Her dishevelled hair, the grey locks in which were not hidden and strayed about her troubled eyes, her ageing cheeks, my grandmother's own dressing-gown which she was wearing, all these had for a moment prevented me from recognising her and had made me uncertain whether I was still asleep or my grandmother had come back to life. For a long time past my mother had resembled my grandmother, far more than the young and smiling Mamma that my childhood had known. But I had ceased to think of this resemblance. So, when we have long been sitting reading, our mind absorbed, we have not noticed how the time was passing, and suddenly we see round about us the sun that shone yesterday at the same hour call up the same harmonies, the same effects of colour that precede a sunset. It was with a smile that my mother made me aware of my mistake, for it was pleasing to her that she should bear so strong a resemblance to her mother. "I came," said my mother, "be-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

cause when I was asleep I thought I heard some one crying. It wakened me. But how is it that you aren't in bed? And your eyes are filled with tears. What is the matter?" I took her head in my arms: "Mamma, listen, I'm afraid you'll think me very changeable. But first of all, yesterday I spoke to you not at all nicely about Albertine; what I said was unfair." "But what difference can that make?" said my mother, and, catching sight of the rising sun, she smiled sadly as she thought of her own mother, and, so that I might not lose the benefit of a spectacle which my grandmother used to regret that I never watched, she pointed to the window. But beyond the beach of Balbec, the sea, the sunrise, which Mamma was pointing out to me, I saw, with movements of despair which did not escape her notice, the room at Montjouvain where Albertine, rosy and round like a great cat, with her rebellious nose, had taken the place of Mlle. Vinteuil's friend and was saying amid peals of her voluptuous laughter: "Well! If they do see us, it will be all the better. I? I wouldn't dare to spit upon that old monkey?" It was this scene that I saw, beyond the scene that was framed in the open window and was no more than a dim veil drawn over the other, super-imposed upon it like a reflexion. It seemed indeed almost unreal, like a painted view. Facing us, where the cliff of Parville jutted out, the little wood in which we had played "ferret" thrust down to the sea's edge, beneath the varnish, still all golden, of the water, the picture of its foliage, as at the hour when often, at the close of day, after I had gone there to rest in the shade with Albertine, we had risen as we saw the sun sink in the sky. In the confusion of the night mists which still hung in rags of pink and

CITIES OF THE PLAIN

blue over the water littered with the pearly fragments of the dawn, boats were going past smiling at the slanting light which gilded their sails and the point of their bowsprits as when they are homeward bound at evening: a scene imaginary, chilling and deserted, a pure evocation of the sunset which did not rest, as at evening, upon the sequence of the hours of the day which I was accustomed to see precede it, detached, interpolated, more unsubstantial even than the horrible image of Montjouvain which it did not succeed in cancelling, covering, concealing—a poetical, vain image of memory and dreams. “But come,” my mother was saying, “you said nothing unpleasant about her, you told me that she bored you a little, that you were glad you had given up the idea of marrying her. There is no reason for you to cry like that. Remember, your Mamma is going away to-day and can’t bear to leave her big baby in such a state. Especially, my poor boy, as I haven’t time to comfort you. Even if my things are packed, one has never any time on the morning of a journey.” “It is not that.” And then, calculating the future, weighing well my desires, realising that such an affection on Albertine’s part for Mlle. Vinteuil’s friend, and one of such long standing, could not have been innocent, that Albertine had been initiated, and, as every one of her instinctive actions made plain to me, had moreover been born with a predisposition towards that vice which in my uneasiness I had only too often dreaded, in which she could never have ceased to indulge (in which she was indulging perhaps at that moment, taking advantage of an instant in which I was not present), I said to my mother, knowing the pain that I was causing her, which she did not shew, and which re-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

vealed itself only by that air of serious preoccupation which she wore when she was weighing the respective seriousness of making me unhappy or making me unwell, that air which she had assumed at Combray for the first time when she had resigned herself to spending the night in my room, that air which at this moment was extraordinarily like my grandmother's when she allowed me to drink brandy, I said to my mother: "I know how what I am going to say will distress you. First of all, instead of remaining here as you wished, I want to leave by the same train as you. But that is nothing. I am not feeling well here, I would rather go home. But listen to me, don't make yourself too miserable. This is what I want to say. I was deceiving myself, I deceived you in good faith, yesterday, I have been thinking over it all night. It is absolutely necessary, and let us decide the matter at once, because I am quite clear about it now in my own mind, because I shall not change again, and I could not live without it, it is absolutely necessary that I marry Albertine."

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

THE CAPTIVE

*“When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past.....”*

CONTENTS

Part I

Chapter I page 1
Life with Albertine.

Chapter II page 259
The Verdurins quarrel with M. de Charlus.

Part II

Chapter II (*continued*) page 279

Chapter III page 445
Flight of Albertine.

To
Lucy Lunn

THE CAPTIVE

CHAPTER I

Life with Albertine

AT daybreak, my face still turned to the wall, and before I had seen above the big inner curtains what tone the first streaks of light assumed, I could already tell what sort of day it was. The first sounds from the street had told me, according to whether they came to my ears dulled and distorted by the moisture of the atmosphere or quivering like arrows in the resonant and empty area of a spacious, crisply frozen, pure morning; as soon as I heard the rumble of the first tramcar, I could tell whether it was sodden with rain or setting forth into the blue. And perhaps these sounds had themselves been forestalled by some swifter and more pervasive emanation which, stealing into my slumber, diffused in it a melancholy that seemed to presage snow, or gave utterance (through the lips of a little person who occasionally reappeared there) to so many hymns to the glory of the sun that, having first of all begun to smile in my sleep, having prepared my eyes, behind their shut lids, to be dazzled, I awoke finally amid deafening strains of music. It was, moreover, principally from my bedroom that I took in the life of the outer world during this period. I know that Bloch reported that, when he called to see me in the evenings, he could hear the sound of conversation; as my mother was at Combray and he never found anybody in my room, he concluded that I was talking to myself. When, much

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

later, he learned that Albertine had been staying with me at the time, and realised that I had concealed her presence from all my friends, he declared that he saw at last the reason why, during that episode in my life, I had always refused to go out of doors. He was wrong. His mistake was, however, quite pardonable, for the truth, even if it is inevitable, is not always conceivable as a whole. People who learn some accurate detail of another person's life at once deduce consequences which are not accurate, and see in the newly discovered fact an explanation of things that have no connexion with it whatsoever.

When I reflect now that my mistress had come, on our return from Balbec, to live in Paris under the same roof as myself, that she had abandoned the idea of going on a cruise, that she was installed in a bedroom within twenty paces of my own, at the end of the corridor, in my father's tapestried study, and that late every night, before leaving me, she used to slide her tongue between my lips like a portion of daily bread, a nourishing food that had the almost sacred character of all flesh upon which the sufferings that we have endured on its account have come in time to confer a sort of spiritual grace, what I at once call to mind in comparison is not the night that Captain de Borodino allowed me to spend in barracks, a favour which cured what was after all only a passing distemper, but the night on which my father sent Mamma to sleep in the little bed by the side of my own. So it is that life, if it is once again to deliver us from an anguish that has seemed inevitable, does so in conditions that are different, so diametrically opposed at times that it is almost an open sacrilege to assert the identity of the grace bestowed upon us.

THE CAPTIVE

When Albertine had heard from Françoise that, in the darkness of my still curtained room, I was not asleep, she had no scruple about making a noise as she took her bath, in her own dressing-room. Then, frequently, instead of waiting until later in the day, I would repair to a bathroom adjoining hers, which had a certain charm of its own. Time was, when a stage manager would spend hundreds of thousands of francs to begem with real emeralds the throne upon which a great actress would play the part of an empress. The Russian ballet has taught us that simple arrangements of light will create, if trained upon the right spot, jewels as gorgeous and more varied. This decoration, itself immaterial, is not so graceful, however, as that which, at eight o'clock in the morning, the sun substitutes for what we were accustomed to see when we did not arise before noon. The windows of our respective bathrooms, so that their occupants might not be visible from without, were not of clear glass but clouded with an artificial and old-fashioned kind of frost. All of a sudden, the sun would colour this drapery of glass, gild it, and discovering in myself an earlier young man whom habit had long concealed, would intoxicate me with memories, as though I were out in the open country gazing at a hedge of golden leaves in which even a bird was not lacking. For I could hear Albertine ceaselessly humming:

For melancholy
Is but folly,
And he who heeds it is a fool.

I loved her so well that I could spare a joyous smile for her bad taste in music. This song had, as it happened,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

during the past summer, delighted Mme. Bontemps, who presently heard people say that it was silly, with the result that, instead of asking Albertine to sing it, when she had a party, she would substitute:

A song of farewell rises from troubled springs,
which in its turn became "an old jingle of Massenet's, the child is always dinning into our ears."

A cloud passed, blotting out the sun; I saw extinguished and replaced by a grey monochrome the modest, screening foliage of the glass.

The partition that divided our two dressing-rooms (Albertine's, identical with my own, was a bathroom which Mamma, who had another at the other end of the flat, had never used for fear of disturbing my rest) was so slender that we could talk to each other as we washed in double privacy, carrying on a conversation that was interrupted only by the sound of the water, in that intimacy which, in hotels, is so often permitted by the smallness and proximity of the rooms, but which, in private houses in Paris, is so rare.

On other mornings, I would remain in bed, drowsing for as long as I chose, for orders had been given that no one was to enter my room until I had rung the bell, an act which, owing to the awkward position in which the electric bulb had been hung above my bed, took such a time that often, tired of feeling for it and glad to be left alone, I would lie back for some moments and almost fall asleep again. It was not that I was wholly indifferent to Albertine's presence in the house. Her separation from her girl friends had the effect of sparing my heart any fresh anguish. She kept it in a state of repose, in a semi-immobility which would help it to recover. But

THE CAPTIVE

after all, this calm which my mistress was procuring for me was a release from suffering rather than a positive joy. Not that it did not permit me to taste many joys, from which too keen a grief had debarred me, but these joys, so far from my owing them to Albertine, in whom for that matter I could no longer see any beauty and who was beginning to bore me, with whom I was now clearly conscious that I was not in love, I tasted on the contrary when Albertine was not with me. And so, to begin the morning, I did not send for her at once, especially if it was a fine day. For some moments, knowing that he would make me happier than Albertine, I remained closeted with the little person inside me, hymning the rising sun, of whom I have already spoken. Of those elements which compose our personality, it is not the most obvious that are most essential. In myself, when ill health has succeeded in uprooting them one after another, there will still remain two or three, endowed with a hardier constitution than the rest, notably a certain philosopher who is happy only when he has discovered in two works of art, in two sensations, a common element. But the last of all, I have sometimes asked myself whether it would not be this little mannikin, very similar to another whom the optician at Combray used to set up in his shop window to forecast the weather, and who, doffing his hood when the sun shone, would put it on again if it was going to rain. This little mannikin, I know his egoism; I may be suffering from a choking fit which the mere threat of rain would calm; he pays no heed, and, at the first drops so impatiently awaited, losing his gaiety, sullenly pulls down his hood. Conversely, I dare say that in my last agony, when all my other "selves" are dead, if a ray

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

of sunshine steals into the room, while I am drawing my last breath, the little fellow of the barometer will feel a great relief, and will throw back his hood to sing: "Ah! Fine weather at last!"

I rang for Françoise. I opened the *Figaro*. I scanned its columns and made sure that it did not contain an article, or so-called article which I had sent to the editor, and which was no more than a slightly revised version of the page that had recently come to light, written long ago in Dr. Percepied's carriage, as I gazed at the spires of Martinville. Then I read Mamma's letter. She felt it to be odd, in fact shocking, that a girl should be staying in the house alone with me. On the first day, at the moment of leaving Balbec, when she saw how wretched I was, and was distressed by the prospect of leaving me by myself, my mother had perhaps been glad when she heard that Albertine was travelling with us, and saw that, side by side with our own boxes (those boxes among which I had passed a night in tears in the Balbec hotel), there had been hoisted into the "Twister" Albertine's boxes also, narrow and black, which had seemed to me to have the appearance of coffins, and as to which I knew not whether they were bringing to my house life or death. But I had never even asked myself the question, being all overjoyed, in the radiant morning, after the fear of having to remain at Balbec, that I was taking Albertine with me. But to this proposal, if at the start my mother had not been hostile (speaking kindly to my friend like a mother whose son has been seriously wounded and who is grateful to the young mistress who is nursing him with loving care), she had acquired hostility now that it had been too completely realised, and

THE CAPTIVE

the girl was prolonging her sojourn in our house, and moreover in the absence of my parents. I cannot, however, say that my mother ever made this hostility apparent. As in the past, when she had ceased to dare to reproach me with my nervous instability, my laziness, now she felt a hesitation—which I perhaps did not altogether perceive at the moment or refused to perceive—to run the risk, by offering any criticism of the girl to whom I had told her that I intended to make an offer of marriage, of bringing a shadow into my life, making me in time to come less devoted to my wife, of sowing perhaps for a season when she herself would no longer be there, the seeds of remorse at having grieved her by marrying Albertine. Mamma preferred to seem to be approving a choice which she felt herself powerless to make me reconsider. But people who came in contact with her at this time have since told me that in addition to her grief at having lost her mother she had an air of constant preoccupation. This mental strife, this inward debate, had the effect of overheating my mother's brow, and she was always opening the windows to let in the fresh air. But she did not succeed in coming to any decision, for fear of influencing me in the wrong direction and so spoiling what she believed to be my happiness. She could not even bring herself to forbid me to keep Albertine for the time being in our house. She did not wish to appear more strict than Mme. Bontemps, who was the person principally concerned, and who saw no harm in the arrangement, which greatly surprised my mother. All the same, she regretted that she had been obliged to leave us together, by departing at that very time for Combray where she might have to remain (and did in

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

fact remain) for months on end, during which my great-aunt required her incessant attention by day and night. Everything was made easy for her down there, thanks to the kindness, the devotion of Legrandin who, gladly undertaking any trouble that was required, kept putting off his return to Paris from week to week, not that he knew my aunt at all well, but simply, first of all, because she had been his mother's friend, and also because he knew that the invalid, condemned to die, valued his attentions and could not get on without him. Snobbishness is a serious malady of the spirit, but one that is localised and does not taint it as a whole. I, on the other hand, unlike Mamma, was extremely glad of her absence at Combray, but for which I should have been afraid (being unable to warn Albertine not to mention it) of her learning of the girl's friendship with Mlle. Vinteuil. This would have been to my mother an insurmountable obstacle, not merely to a marriage as to which she had, for that matter, begged me to say nothing definite as yet to Albertine, and the thought of which was becoming more and more intolerable to myself, but even to the latter's being allowed to stay for any length of time in the house. Apart from so grave a reason, which in this case did not apply, Mamma, under the dual influence of my grandmother's liberating and edifying example, according to whom, in her admiration of George Sand, virtue consisted in nobility of heart, and of my own corruption, was now indulgent towards women whose conduct she would have condemned in the past, or even now, had they been any of her own middle-class friends in Paris or at Combray, but whose lofty natures I extolled to her and to whom she pardoned much because of their affection for myself.

THE CAPTIVE

But when all is said, and apart from any question of propriety, I doubt whether Albertine could have put up with Mamma who had acquired from Combray, from my aunt Léonie, from all her kindred, habits of punctuality and order of which my mistress had not the remotest conception.

She would never think of shutting a door and, on the other hand, would no more hesitate to enter a room if the door stood open than would a dog or a cat. Her somewhat disturbing charm was, in fact, that of taking the place in the household not so much of a girl as of a domestic animal which comes into a room, goes out, is to be found wherever one does not expect to find it and (in her case) would—bringing me a profound sense of repose—come and lie down on my bed by my side, make a place for herself from which she never stirred, without being in my way as a person would have been. She ended, however, by conforming to my hours of sleep, and not only never attempted to enter my room but would take care not to make a sound until I had rung my bell. It was Françoise who impressed these rules of conduct upon her.

She was one of those Combray servants, conscious of their master's place in the world, and that the least that they can do is to see that he is treated with all the respect to which they consider him entitled. When a stranger on leaving after a visit gave Françoise a gratuity to be shared with the kitchenmaid, he had barely slipped his coin into her hand before Françoise, with an equal display of speed, discretion and energy, had passed the word to the kitchenmaid who came forward to thank him, not in a whisper, but openly and aloud, as Françoise had told

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

her that she must do. The parish priest of Combray was no genius, but he also knew what was due to him. Under his instruction, the daughter of some Protestant cousins of Mme. Sazerat had been received into the Church, and her family had been most grateful to him: it was a question of her marriage to a young nobleman of Méséglise. The young man's relatives wrote to inquire about her in a somewhat arrogant letter, in which they expressed their dislike of her Protestant origin. The Combray priest replied in such a tone that the Méséglise nobleman, crushed and prostrate, wrote a very different letter in which he begged as the most precious favour the award of the girl's hand in marriage.

Françoise deserved no special credit for making Albertine respect my slumbers. She was imbued with tradition. From her studied silence, or the peremptory response that she made to a proposal to enter my room, or to send in some message to me, which Albertine had expressed in all innocence, the latter realised with astonishment that she was now living in an alien world, where strange customs prevailed, governed by rules of conduct which one must never dream of infringing. She had already had a foreboding of this at Balbec, but, in Paris, made no attempt to resist, and would wait patiently every morning for the sound of my bell before venturing to make any noise.

The training that Françoise gave her was of value also to our old servant herself, for it gradually stilled the lamentations which, ever since our return from Balbec, she had not ceased to utter. For, just as we were boarding the tram, she remembered that she had forgotten to say good-bye to the housekeeper of the Hotel, a whiskered

THE CAPTIVE

dame who looked after the bedroom floors, barely knew Françoise by sight, but had been comparatively civil to her. Françoise positively insisted upon getting out of the tram, going back to the Hotel, saying good-bye properly to the housekeeper, and not leaving for Paris until the following day. Common sense, coupled with my sudden horror of Balbec, restrained me from granting her this concession, but my refusal had infected her with a feverish distemper which the change of air had not sufficed to cure and which lingered on in Paris. For, according to Françoise's code, as it is illustrated in the carvings of Saint-André-des-Champs, to wish for the death of an enemy, even to inflict it is not forbidden, but it is a horrible sin not to do what is expected of you, not to return a civility, to refrain, like a regular churl, from saying good-bye to the housekeeper before leaving a hotel. Throughout the journey, the continually recurring memory of her not having taken leave of this woman had dyed Françoise's cheeks with a scarlet flush that was quite alarming. And if she refused to taste bite or sup until we reached Paris, it was perhaps because this memory heaped a "regular load" upon her stomach (every class of society has a pathology of its own) even more than with the intention of punishing us.

Among the reasons which led Mamma to write me a daily letter, and a letter which never failed to include some quotation from Mme. de Sévigné, there was the memory of my grandmother. Mamma would write to me: "Mme. Sazerat gave us one of those little lunches of which she possesses the secret and which, as your poor grandmother would have said, quoting Mme. de Sévigné, deprive us of solitude without affording us

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

company.” In one of my own earlier letters I was so inept as to write to Mamma: “By those quotations, your mother would recognise you at once.” Which brought me, three days later, the reproof: “My poor boy, if it was only to speak to me of *my mother*, your reference to Mme. de Sévigné was most inappropriate. She would have answered you as she answered Mme. de Grignan: ‘So she was nothing to you? I had supposed that you were related.’”

By this time, I could hear my mistress leaving or returning to her room. I rang the bell, for it was time now for Andrée to arrive with the chauffeur, Morel’s friend, lent me by the Verdurins, to take Albertine out. I had spoken to the last-named of the remote possibility of our marriage; but I had never made her any formal promise; she herself, from discretion, when I said to her: “I can’t tell, but it might perhaps be possible,” had shaken her head with a melancholy sigh, as much as to say: “Oh, no, never,” in other words: “I am too poor.” And so, while I continued to say: “It is quite indefinite,” when speaking of future projects, at the moment I was doing everything in my power to amuse her, to make life pleasant to her, with perhaps the unconscious design of thereby making her wish to marry me. She herself laughed at my lavish generosity. “Andrée’s mother would be in a fine state if she saw me turn into a rich lady like herself, what she calls a lady who has her own ‘horses, carriages, pictures.’ What? Did I never tell you that she says that. Oh, she’s a character! What surprises me is that she seems to think pictures just as important as horses and carriages.” We shall see in due course that, notwithstanding the foolish ways of speaking

THE CAPTIVE

that she had not outgrown, Albertine had developed to an astonishing extent, which left me unmoved, the intellectual superiority of a woman friend having always interested me so little that if I have ever complimented any of my friends upon her own, it was purely out of politeness. Alone, the curious genius of Céleste might perhaps appeal to me. In spite of myself, I would continue to smile for some moments, when, for instance, having discovered that Françoise was not in my room, she accosted me with: "Heavenly deity reclining on a bed!" "But why, Céleste," I would say, "why deity?" "Oh, if you suppose that you have anything in common with the mortals who make their pilgrimage on our vile earth, you are greatly mistaken!" "But why 'reclining' on a bed, can't you see that I'm lying in bed?" "You never lie. Who ever saw anybody lie like that? You have just alighted there. With your white pyjamas, and the way you twist your neck, you look for all the world like a dove."

Albertine, even in the discussion of the most trivial matters, expressed herself very differently from the little girl that she had been only a few years earlier at Balbec. She went so far as to declare, with regard to a political incident of which she disapproved: "I consider that ominous." And I am not sure that it was not about this time that she learned to say, when she meant that she felt a book to be written in a bad style: "It is interesting, but really, it might have been written *by a pig*."

The rule that she must not enter my room until I had rung amused her greatly. As she had adopted our family habit of quotation, and in following it drew upon the plays in which she had acted at her convent and for

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

which I had expressed admiration, she always compared me to Assuérus:

And death is the reward of whoso dares
To venture in his presence unawares. . . .
None is exempt; nor is there any whom
Or rank or sex can save from such a doom;
Even I myself . . .
Like all the rest, I by this law am bound;
And, to address him, I must first be found
By him, or he must call me to his side.

Physically, too, she had altered. Her blue, almond-shaped eyes, grown longer, had not kept their form; they were indeed of the same colour, but seemed to have passed into a liquid state. So much so that, when she shut them it was as though a pair of curtains had been drawn to shut out a view of the sea. It was no doubt this one of her features that I remembered most vividly each night after we had parted. For, on the contrary, every morning the ripple of her hair continued to give me the same surprise, as though it were some novelty that I had never seen before. And yet, above the smiling eyes of a girl, what could be more beautiful than that clustering coronet of black violets? The smile offers greater friendship; but the little gleaming tips of blossoming hair, more akin to the flesh, of which they seem to be a transposition into tiny waves, are more provocative of desire.

As soon as she entered my room, she sprang upon my bed and sometimes would expatiate upon my type of intellect, would vow in a transport of sincerity that she would sooner die than leave me: this was on mornings when I had shaved before sending for her. She was one of those women who can never distinguish the cause

THE CAPTIVE

of their sensations. The pleasure that they derive from a smooth cheek they explain to themselves by the moral qualities of the man who seems to offer them a possibility of future happiness, which is capable, however, of diminishing and becoming less necessary the longer he refrains from shaving.

I inquired where she was thinking of going.

"I believe Andrée wants to take me to the Buttes-Chaumont; I have never been there."

Of course it was impossible for me to discern among so many other words whether beneath these a falsehood lay concealed. Besides, I could trust Andrée to tell me of all the places that she visited with Albertine.

At Balbec, when I felt that I was utterly tired of Albertine, I had made up my mind to say, untruthfully, to Andrée: "My little Andrée, if only I had met you again sooner! It is you that I would have loved. But now my heart is pledged in another quarter. All the same, we can see a great deal of each other, for my love for another is causing me great anxiety, and you will help me to find consolation." And lo, these identical lying words had become true within the space of three weeks. Perhaps, Andrée had believed in Paris that it was indeed a lie and that I was in love with her, as she would doubtless have believed at Balbec. For the truth is so variable for each of us, that other people have difficulty in recognising themselves in it. And as I knew that she would tell me everything that she and Albertine had done, I had asked her, and she had agreed to come and call for Albertine almost every day. In this way I might without anxiety remain at home.

Also, Andrée's privileged position as one of the girls

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

of the little band gave me confidence that she would obtain everything that I might require from Albertine. Truly, I could have said to her now in all sincerity that she would be capable of setting my mind at rest.

At the same time, my choice of Andrée (who happened to be staying in Paris, having given up her plan of returning to Balbec) as guide and companion to my mistress was prompted by what Albertine had told me of the affection that her friend had felt for me at Balbec, at a time when, on the contrary, I had supposed that I was boring her; indeed, if I had known this at the time, it is perhaps with Andrée that I would have fallen in love.

"What, you never knew," said Albertine, "but we were always joking about it. Do you mean to say you never noticed how she used to copy all your ways of talking and arguing? When she had just been with you, it was too obvious. She had no need to tell us whether she had seen you. As soon as she joined us, we could tell at once. We used to look at one another, and laugh. She was like a coalheaver who tries to pretend that he isn't one. He is black all over. A miller has no need to say that he is a miller, you can see the flour all over his clothes; and the mark of the sacks he has carried on his shoulder. Andrée was just the same, she would knit her eyebrows the way you do, and stretch out her long neck, and I don't know what all. When I take up a book that has been in your room, even if I'm reading it out of doors, I can tell at once that it belongs to you because it still reeks of your beastly fumigations. It's only a trifle, still it's rather a nice trifle, don't you know. Whenever anybody spoke nicely about you, seemed to think a lot of you, Andrée was in ecstasies."

THE CAPTIVE

Notwithstanding all this, in case there might have been some secret plan made behind my back, I advised her to give up the Buttes-Chaumont for that day and to go instead to Saint-Cloud or somewhere else.

It was certainly not, as I was well aware, because I was the least bit in love with Albertine. Love is nothing more perhaps than the stimulation of those eddies which, in the wake of an emotion, stir the soul. Certain such eddies had indeed stirred my soul through and through when Albertine spoke to me at Balbec about Mlle. Vineteuil, but these were now stilled. I was no longer in love with Albertine, for I no longer felt anything of the suffering, now healed, which I had felt in the tram at Balbec, upon learning how Albertine had spent her girlhood, with visits perhaps to Montjouvain. All this, I had too long taken for granted, was healed. But, now and again, certain expressions used by Albertine made me suppose—why, I cannot say—that she must in the course of her life, short as it had been, have received declarations of affection, and have received them with pleasure, that is to say with sensuality. Thus, she would say, in any connexion: “Is that true? Is it really true?” Certainly, if she had said, like an Odette: “Is it really true, that thumping lie?” I should not have been disturbed, for the absurdity of the formula would have explained itself as a stupid inanity of feminine wit. But her questioning air: “Is that true?” gave on the one hand the strange impression of a creature incapable of judging things by herself, who appeals to you for your testimony, as though she were not endowed with the same faculties as yourself (if you said to her: “Why, we’ve been out for a whole hour,” or “It is raining,” she would ask: “Is

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

that true?"). Unfortunately, on the other hand, this want of facility in judging external phenomena for herself could not be the real origin of her "Is that true? Is it really true?" It seemed rather that these words had been, from the dawn of her precocious adolescence, replies to: "You know, I never saw anybody as pretty as you." "You know I am madly in love with you, I am most terribly excited."—affirmations that were answered, with a coquettishly consenting modesty, by these repetitions of: "Is that true? Is it really true?" which no longer served Albertine, when in my company, save to reply by a question to some such affirmation as: "You have been asleep for more than an hour." "Is that true?"

Without feeling that I was the least thing in the world in love with Albertine, without including in the list of my pleasures the moments that we spent together, I was still preoccupied with the way in which she disposed of her time; had I not, indeed, fled from Balbec in order to make certain that she could no longer meet this or that person with whom I was so afraid of her misbehaving, simply as a joke (a joke at my expense, perhaps), that I had adroitly planned to sever, at one and the same time, by my departure, all her dangerous entanglements? And Albertine was so entirely passive, had so complete a faculty of forgetting things and submitting to pressure, that these relations had indeed been severed and I myself relieved of my haunting dread. But that dread is capable of assuming as many forms as the undefined evil that is its cause. So long as my jealousy was not reincarnate in fresh people, I had enjoyed after the passing of my anguish an interval of calm. But with a chronic malady, the slightest pretext serves to revive it, as also with the

THE CAPTIVE

vice of the person who is the cause of our jealousy the slightest opportunity may serve her to practise it anew (after a lull of chastity) with different people. I had managed to separate Albertine from her accomplices, and, by so doing, to exorcise my hallucinations; even if it was possible to make her forget people, to cut short her attachments, her sensual inclination was, itself also, chronic and was perhaps only waiting for an opportunity to afford itself an outlet. Now Paris provided just as many opportunities as Balbec.

In any town whatsoever, she had no need to seek, for the evil existed not in Albertine alone, but in others to whom any opportunity for enjoyment is good. A glance from one, understood at once by the other, brings the two famished souls in contact. And it is easy for a clever woman to appear not to have seen, then five minutes later to join the person who has read her glance and is waiting for her in a side street, and, in a few words, to make an appointment. Who will ever know? And it was so simple for Albertine to tell me, in order that she might continue these practices, that she was anxious to see again some place on the outskirts of Paris that she had liked. And so it was enough that she should return later than usual, that her expedition should have taken an unaccountable time, although it was perfectly easy perhaps to account for it without introducing any sensual reason, for my malady to break out afresh, attached this time to mental pictures which were not of Balbec, and which I would set to work, as with their predecessors, to destroy, as though the destruction of an ephemeral cause could put an end to a congenital malady. I did not take into account the fact that in these acts of destruction, in

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

which I had as an accomplice, in Albertine, her faculty of changing, her ability to forget, almost to hate the recent object of her love, I was sometimes causing a profound grief to one or other of those persons unknown with whom in turn she had taken her pleasure, and that this grief I was causing them in vain, for they would be abandoned, replaced, and, parallel to the path strewn with all the derelicts of her light-hearted infidelities, there would open for me another, pitiless path broken only by an occasional brief respite; so that my suffering could end only with Albertine's life or with my own. Even in the first days after our return to Paris, not satisfied by the information that Andrée and the chauffeur had given me as to their expeditions with my mistress, I had felt the neighbourhood of Paris to be as tormenting as that of Balbec, and had gone off for a few days in the country with Albertine. But everywhere my uncertainty as to what she might be doing was the same; the possibility that it was something wrong as abundant, vigilance even more difficult, with the result that I returned with her to Paris. In leaving Balbec, I had imagined that I was leaving Gomorrah, plucking Albertine from it; in reality, alas, Gomorrah was dispersed to all the ends of the earth. And partly out of jealousy, partly out of ignorance of such joys (a case which is rare indeed), I had arranged unawares this game of hide and seek in which Albertine was always to escape me.

I questioned her point-blank: "Oh, by the way, Albertine, am I dreaming, or did you tell me that you knew Gilberte Swann?" "Yes; that is to say, she used to talk to me at our classes, because she had a set of the French history notes, in fact she was very nice about it,

THE CAPTIVE

and let me borrow them, and I gave them back the next time I saw her." "Is she the kind of woman that I object to?" "Oh, not at all, quite the opposite." But, rather than indulge in this sort of criminal investigation, I would often devote to imagining Albertine's excursion the energy that I did not employ in sharing it, and would speak to my mistress with that ardour which remains intact in our unfulfilled designs. I expressed so keen a longing to see once again some window in the Sainte-Chapelle, so keen a regret that I was not able to go there with her alone, that she said to me lovingly: "Why, my dear boy, since you seem so keen about it, make a little effort, come with us. We can start as late as you like, whenever you're ready. And if you'd rather be alone with me, I have only to send Andrée home, she can come another time." But these very entreaties to me to go out added to the calm which allowed me to yield to my desire to remain indoors.

It did not occur to me that the apathy that was indicated by my delegating thus to Andrée or the chauffeur the task of soothing my agitation by leaving them to keep watch over Albertine, was paralysing in me, rendering inert all those imaginative impulses of the mind, all those inspirations of the will, which enable us to guess, to forestall, what some one else is about to do; indeed the world of possibilities has always been more open to me than that of real events. This helps us to understand the human heart, but we are apt to be taken in by individuals. My jealousy was born of mental images, a form of self torment not based upon probability. Now there may occur in the lives of men and of nations (and there was to occur, one day, in my own life) a moment

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

when we need to have within us a superintendent of police, a clear-sighted diplomat, a master-detective, who instead of pondering over the concealed possibilities that extend to all the points of the compass, reasons accurately, says to himself: "If Germany announces this, it means that she intends to do something else, not just 'something' in the abstract but precisely this or that or the other, which she may perhaps have begun already to do." "If so-and-so has fled, it is not in the direction *a* or *b* or *d*, but to the point *c*, and the place to which we must direct our search for him is *c*." Alas, this faculty which was not highly developed in me, I allowed to grow slack, to lose its power, to vanish, by acquiring the habit of growing calm the moment that other people were engaged in keeping watch on my behalf.

As for the reason for my reluctance to leave the house, I should not have liked to explain it to Albertine. I told her that the doctor had ordered me to stay in bed. This was not true. And if it had been true, his prescription would have been powerless to prevent me from accompanying my mistress. I asked her to excuse me from going out with herself and Andrée. I shall mention only one of my reasons, which was dictated by prudence. Whenever I went out with Albertine, if she left my side for a moment, I became anxious, began to imagine that she had spoken to, or simply cast a glance at somebody. If she was not in the best of tempers, I thought that I was causing her to miss or to postpone some appointment. Reality is never more than an allurement to an unknown element in quest of which we can never progress very far. It is better not to know, to think as little as possible, not to feed our jealousy with the slightest concrete detail.

THE CAPTIVE

Unfortunately, even when we eliminate the outward life, incidents are created by the inward life also; though I held aloof from Albertine's expeditions, the random course of my solitary reflexions furnished me at times with those tiny fragments of the truth which attract to themselves, like a magnet, an inkling of the unknown, which, from that moment, becomes painful. Even if we live in a hermetically sealed compartment, associations of ideas, memories continue to act upon us. But these internal shocks did not occur immediately; no sooner had Albertine started on her drive than I was revived, were it only for a few moments, by the stimulating virtues of solitude.

I took my share of the pleasures of the new day; the arbitrary desire—the capricious and purely spontaneous inclination to taste them would not have sufficed to place them within my reach, had not the peculiar state of the weather not merely reminded me of their images in the past but affirmed their reality in the present, immediately accessible to all men whom a contingent and consequently negligible circumstance did not compel to remain at home. On certain fine days the weather was so cold, one was in such full communication with the street that it seemed as though a breach had been made in the outer walls of the house, and, whenever a tramcar passed, the sound of its bell throbbed like that of a silver knife striking a wall of glass. But it was most of all in myself that I heard, with intoxication, a new sound rendered by the hidden violin. Its strings are tightened or relaxed by mere changes of temperature, of light, in the world outside. In our person, an instrument which the uniformity of habit has rendered silent, song is born of these digressions, these variations,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the source of all music: the change of climate on certain days makes us pass at once from one note to another. We recapture the forgotten air the mathematical inevitability of which we might have deduced, and which for the first few moments we sing without recognising it. By themselves these modifications (which, albeit coming from without, were internal) refashioned for me the world outside. Communicating doors, long barred, opened themselves in my brain. The life of certain towns, the gaiety of certain expeditions resumed their place in my consciousness. All athrob in harmony with the vibrating string, I would have sacrificed my dull life in the past, and all my life to come, erased with the india-rubber of habit, for one of these special, unique moments.

If I had not gone out with Albertine on her long drive, my mind would stray all the farther afield, and, because I had refused to savour with my senses this particular morning, I enjoyed in imagination all the similar mornings, past or possible, or more precisely a certain type of morning of which all those of the same kind were but the intermittent apparition which I had at once recognised; for the keen air blew the book open of its own accord at the right page, and I found clearly set out before my eyes, so that I might follow it from my bed, the Gospel for the day. This ideal morning filled my mind full of a permanent reality, identical with all similar mornings, and infected me with a cheerfulness which my physical ill-health did not diminish: for, inasmuch as our sense of wellbeing is caused not so much by our sound health as by the unemployed surplus of our strength, we can attain to it, just as much as by increasing our strength, by diminishing our activity. The activity with which I was over-

THE CAPTIVE

flowing and which I kept constantly charged as I lay in bed, made me spring from side to side, with a leaping heart, like a machine which, prevented from moving in space, rotates on its own axis.

Françoise came in to light the fire, and to make it draw, threw upon it a handful of twigs, the scent of which, forgotten for a year past, traced round the fireplace a magic circle within which, perceiving myself poring over a book, now at Combray, now at Doncières, I was as joyful, while remaining in my bedroom in Paris, as if I had been on the point of starting for a walk along the Méséglise way, or of going to join Saint-Loup and his friends on the training-ground. It often happens that the pleasure which everyone takes in turning over the keepsakes that his memory has collected is keenest in those whom the tyranny of bodily ill-health and the daily hope of recovery prevent, on the one hand, from going out to seek in nature scenes that resemble those memories, and, on the other hand, leave so convinced that they will shortly be able to do so that they can remain gazing at them in a state of desire, of appetite, and not regard them merely as memories, as pictures. But, even if they were never to be anything more than memories to me, even if I, as I recalled them, saw merely pictures, immediately they recreated in me, of me as a whole, by virtue of an identical sensation, the boy, the youth who had first seen them. There had been not merely a change in the weather outside, or, inside the room, the introduction of a fresh scent, there had been in myself a difference of age, the substitution of another person. The scent, in the frosty air, of the twigs of brushwood, was like a fragment of the past, an invisible floe broken off from the ice of an old winter

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

that stole into my room, often variegated moreover with this perfume or that light, as though with a sequence of different years, in which I found myself plunged, overwhelmed, even before I had identified them, by the eagerness of hopes long since abandoned. The sun's rays fell upon my bed and passed through the transparent shell of my attenuated body, warmed me, made me as hot as a sheet of scorching crystal. Whereupon, a famished convalescent who has already begun to batten upon all the dishes that are still forbidden him, I asked myself whether marriage with Albertine would not spoil my life, as well by making me assume the burden, too heavy for my shoulders, of consecrating myself to another person, as by forcing me to live in absence from myself because of her continual presence and depriving me, forever, of the delights of solitude.

And not of these alone. Even when we ask of the day nothing but desires, there are some—those that are excited not by things but by people—whose character it is to be unlike any other. If, on rising from my bed, I went to the window and drew the curtain aside for a moment, it was not merely, as a pianist for a moment turns back the lid of his instrument, to ascertain whether, on the balcony and in the street, the sunlight was tuned to exactly the same pitch as in my memory, it was also to catch a glimpse of some laundress carrying her linen-basket, a bread-seller in her blue apron, a dairymaid in her tucker and sleeves of white linen, carrying the yoke from which her jugs of milk are suspended, some haughty golden-haired miss escorted by her governess, a composite image, in short, which the differences of outline, numerically perhaps insignificant, were enough to make as

THE CAPTIVE

different from any other as, in a phrase of music, the difference between two notes, an image but for the vision of which I should have impoverished my day of the objects which it might have to offer to my desires of happiness. But, if the surfeit of joy, brought me by the spectacle of women whom it was impossible to imagine *a priori*, made more desirable, more deserving of exploration, the street, the town, the world, it set me longing, for that very reason, to recover my health, to go out of doors and, without Albertine, to be a free man. How often, at the moment when the unknown woman who was to haunt my dreams passed beneath the window, now on foot, now at the full speed of her motor-car, was I made wretched that my body could not follow my gaze which kept pace with her, and falling upon her as though shot from the embrasure of my window by an arquebus, arrest the flight of the face that held out for me the offer of a happiness which, cloistered thus, I should never know.

Of Albertine, on the other hand, I had nothing more to learn. Every day, she seemed to me less attractive. Only, the desire that she aroused in other people, when, upon hearing of it, I began to suffer afresh and was impelled to challenge their possession of her, raised her in my sight to a lofty pinnacle. Pain, she was capable of causing me; joy, never. Pain alone kept my tedious attachment alive. As soon as my pain vanished, and with it the need to soothe it, requiring all my attention, like some agonising distraction, I felt that she meant absolutely nothing to me, that I must mean absolutely nothing to her. It made me wretched that this state should persist, and, at certain moments, I longed to

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

hear of something terrible that she had done, something that would be capable of keeping us at armslength until I was cured, so that we might then be able to be reconciled, to refashion in a different and more flexible form the chain that bound us.

In the meantime, I was employing a thousand circumstances, a thousand pleasures to procure for her in my society the illusion of that happiness which I did not feel myself capable of giving her. I should have liked, as soon as I was cured, to set off for Venice, but how was I to manage it, if I married Albertine, I, who was so jealous of her that even in Paris whenever I decided to stir from my room it was to go out with her? Even when I stayed in the house all the afternoon, my thoughts accompanied her on her drive, traced a remote, blue horizon, created round the centre that was myself a fluctuating zone of vague uncertainty. "How completely," I said to myself, "would Albertine spare me the anguish of separation if, in the course of one of these drives, seeing that I no longer say anything to her about marriage, she decided not to come back, and went off to her aunt's, without my having to bid her good-bye!" My heart, now that its scar had begun to heal, was ceasing to adhere to the heart of my mistress; I could by imagination shift her, separate her from myself without pain. No doubt, failing myself, some other man would be her husband, and in her freedom she would meet perhaps with those adventures which filled me with horror. But the day was so fine, I was so certain that she would return in the evening, that even if the idea of possible misbehaviour did enter my mind, I could, by an exercise of free will, imprison it in a part of my brain in which it

THE CAPTIVE

had no more importance than would have had in my real life the vices of an imaginary person; bringing into play the supple hinges of my thought, I had, with an energy which I felt in my head to be at once physical and mental, as it were a muscular movement and a spiritual impulse, broken away from the state of perpetual preoccupation in which I had until then been confined, and was beginning to move in a free atmosphere, in which the idea of sacrificing everything in order to prevent Albertine from marrying some one else and to put an obstacle in the way of her fondness for women seemed as unreasonable to my own mind as to that of a person who had never known her.

However, jealousy is one of those intermittent maladies, the cause of which is capricious, imperative, always identical in the same patient, sometimes entirely different in another. There are asthmatic persons who can soothe their crises only by opening the windows, inhaling the full blast of the wind, the pure air of the mountains, others by taking refuge in the heart of the city, in a room heavy with smoke. Rare indeed is the jealous man whose jealousy does not allow certain concessions. One will consent to infidelity, provided that he is told of it, another provided that it is concealed from him, wherein they appear to be equally absurd, since if the latter is more literally deceived inasmuch as the truth is not disclosed to him, the other demands in that truth the food, the extension, the renewal of his sufferings.

What is more, these two parallel manias of jealousy extend often beyond words, whether they implore or reject confidences. We see a jealous lover who is jealous only of the women with whom his mistress has relations

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

in his absence, but allows her to give herself to another man, if it is done with his authorisation, near at hand, and, if not actually before his eyes, under his roof. This case is not at all uncommon among elderly men who are in love with young women. Such a man feels the difficulty of winning her favour, sometimes his inability to satisfy her, and, rather than be betrayed, prefers to admit to his house, to an adjoining room, some man whom he considers incapable of giving her bad advice, but not incapable of giving her pleasure. With another man it is just the opposite; never allowing his mistress to go out by herself for a single minute in a town that he knows, he keeps her in a state of bondage, but allows her to go for a month to a place which he does not know, where he cannot form any mental picture of what she may be doing. I had with regard to Albertine both these sorts of sedative mania. I should not have been jealous if she had enjoyed her pleasures in my company, with my encouragement, pleasures over the whole of which I could have kept watch, thus avoiding any fear of falsehood; I might perhaps not have been jealous either if she had removed to a place so unfamiliar and remote that I could not imagine nor find any possibility, feel any temptation to know the manner of her life. In either alternative, my uncertainty would have been killed by a knowledge or an ignorance equally complete.

The decline of day plunging me back by an act of memory in a cool atmosphere of long ago, I breathed it with the same delight with which Orpheus inhaled the subtle air, unknown upon this earth, of the Elysian Fields.

But already the day was ending and I was overpowered by the desolation of the evening. Looking me-

THE CAPTIVE

chanically at the clock to see how many hours must elapse before Albertine's return, I saw that I had still time to dress and go downstairs to ask my landlady, Mme. de Guermantes, for particulars of various becoming garments which I was anxious to procure for my mistress. Sometimes I met the Duchess in the courtyard, going out for a walk, even if the weather was bad, in a close-fitting hat and furs. I knew quite well that, to many people of intelligence, she was merely a lady like any other, the name Duchesse de Guermantes signifying nothing, now that there are no longer any sovereign Duchies or Principalities, but I had adopted a different point of view in my method of enjoying people and places. All the castles of the territories of which she was Duchess, Princess, Viscountess, this lady in furs defying the weather seemed to me to be carrying them on her person, as a figure carved over the lintel of a church door holds in his hand the cathedral that he has built or the city that he has defended. But these castles, these forests, my mind's eye alone could discern them in the left hand of the lady in furs, whom the King called cousin. My bodily eyes distinguished in it only, on days when the sky was threatening, an umbrella with which the Duchess was not afraid to arm herself. "One can never be certain, it is wiser, I may find myself miles from home, with a cabman demanding a fare *beyond my means*." The words "too dear" and "beyond my means" kept recurring all the time in the Duchess's conversation, as did also: "I am too poor"—without its being possible to decide whether she spoke thus because she thought it amusing to say that she was poor, being so rich, or because she thought it smart, being so aristocratic, in spite

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

of her affectation of peasant ways, not to attach to riches the importance that people give them who are merely rich and nothing else, and who look down upon the poor. Perhaps it was, rather, a habit contracted at a time in her life when, already rich, but not rich enough to satisfy her needs, considering the expense of keeping up all those properties, she felt a certain shortage of money which she did not wish to appear to be concealing. The things about which we most often jest are generally, on the contrary, the things that embarrass us, but we do not wish to appear to be embarrassed by them, and feel perhaps a secret hope of the further advantage that the person to whom we are talking, hearing us treat the matter as a joke, will conclude that it is not true.

But upon most evenings, at this hour, I could count upon finding the Duchess at home, and I was glad of this, for it was more convenient for me to ask her in detail for the information that Albertine required. And down I went almost without thinking how extraordinary it was that I should be calling upon that mysterious Mme. de Guermantes of my boyhood, simply in order to make use of her for a practical purpose, as one makes use of the telephone, a supernatural instrument before whose miracles we used to stand amazed, and which we now employ without giving it a thought, to summon our tailor or to order ices for a party.

Albertine delighted in any sort of finery. I could not deny myself the pleasure of giving her some new trifle every day. And whenever she had spoken to me with rapture of a scarf, a stole, a sunshade which, from the window or as they passed one another in the courtyard, her eyes that so quickly distinguished anything smart,

THE CAPTIVE

had seen round the throat, over the shoulders, in the hand of Mme. de Guermantes, knowing how the girl's naturally fastidious taste (refined still further by the lessons in elegance of attire which Elstir's conversation had been to her) would not be at all satisfied by any mere substitute, even of a pretty thing, such as fills its place in the eyes of the common herd, but differs from it entirely, I went in secret to make the Duchess explain to me where, how, from what model the article had been created that had taken Albertine's fancy, how I should set about to obtain one exactly similar, in what the creator's secret, the charm (what Albertine called the "*chic*," the "style") of his manner, the precise name—the beauty of the material being of importance also—and quality of the stuffs that I was to insist upon their using.

When I mentioned to Albertine, on our return from Balbec, that the Duchess de Guermantes lived opposite to us, in the same mansion, she had assumed, on hearing the proud title and great name, that air more than indifferent, hostile, contemptuous, which is the sign of an impotent desire in proud and passionate natures. Splendid as Albertine's nature might be, the fine qualities which it contained were free to develop only amid those hindrances which are our personal tastes, or that lamentation for those of our tastes which we have been obliged to relinquish—in Albertine's case snobbishness—which is called antipathy. Albertine's antipathy to people in society occupied, for that matter, but a very small part in her nature, and appealed to me as an aspect of the revolutionary spirit—that is to say an embittered love of the nobility—engraved upon the opposite side of the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

French character to that which displays the aristocratic manner of Mme. de Guermantes. To this aristocratic manner Albertine, in view of the impossibility of her acquiring it, would perhaps not have given a thought, but remembering that Elstir had spoken to her of the Duchess as the best dressed woman in Paris, her republican contempt for a Duchess gave place in my mistress to a keen interest in a fashionable woman. She was always asking me to tell her about Mme. de Guermantes, and was glad that I should go to the Duchess to obtain advice as to her own attire. No doubt I might have got this from Mme. Swann and indeed I did once write to her with this intention. But Mme. de Guermantes seemed to me to carry to an even higher pitch the art of dressing. If, on going down for a moment to call upon her, after making sure that she had not gone out and leaving word that I was to be told as soon as Albertine returned, I found the Duchess swathed in the mist of a garment of grey crêpe de Chine, I accepted this aspect of her which I felt to be due to complex causes and to be quite inevitable, I let myself be overpowered by the atmosphere which it exhaled, like that of certain late afternoons cushioned in pearly grey by a vaporous fog; if, on the other hand, her indoor gown was Chinese with red and yellow flames, I gazed at it as at a glowing sunset; these garments were not a casual decoration alterable at her pleasure, but a definite and poetical reality like that of the weather, or the light peculiar to a certain hour of the day.

Of all the outdoor and indoor gowns that Mme. de Guermantes wore, those which seemed most to respond to a definite intention, to be endowed with a special sig-

THE CAPTIVE

nificance, were the garments made by Fortuny from old Venetian models. Is it their historical character, is it rather the fact that each one of them is unique that gives them so special a significance that the pose of the woman who is wearing one while she waits for you to appear or while she talks to you assumes an exceptional importance, as though the costume had been the fruit of a long deliberation and your conversation was detached from the current of everyday life like a scene in a novel? In the novels of Balzac, we see his heroines purposely put on one or another dress on the day on which they are expecting some particular visitor. The dresses of to-day have less character, always excepting the creations of Fortuny. There is no room for vagueness in the novelist's description, since the gown does really exist, and the merest sketch of it is as naturally preordained as a copy of a work of art. Before putting on one or another of them, the woman has had to make a choice between two garments, not more or less alike but each one profoundly individual, and answering to its name. But the dress did not prevent me from thinking of the woman.

Indeed, Mme. de Guermantes seemed to me at this time more attractive than in the days when I was still in love with her. Expecting less of her (whom I no longer went to visit for her own sake), it was almost with the ease and comfort of a man in a room by himself, with his feet on the fender, that I listened to her as though I were reading a book written in the speech of long ago. My mind was sufficiently detached to enjoy in what she said that pure charm of the French language which we no longer find either in the speech or in the literature of the present day. I listened to her conversation as to a

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

folk song deliciously and purely French, I realised that I would have allowed her to belittle Maeterlinck (whom for that matter she now admired, from a feminine weakness of intellect, influenced by those literary fashions whose rays spread slowly), as I realised that Mérimée had belittled Baudelaire, Stendhal Balzac, Paul-Louis Courier Victor Hugo, Meilhac Mallarmé. I realised that the critic had a far more restricted outlook than his victim, but also a purer vocabulary. That of Mme. de Guermantes, almost as much as that of Saint-Loup's mother, was purified to an enchanting degree. It is not in the bloodless formulas of the writers of to-day, who say: *au fait* (for "in reality"), *singulièrement* (for "in particular"), *étonné* (for "struck with amazement"), and the like, that we recapture the old speech and the true pronunciation of words, but in conversing with a Mme. de Guermantes or a Françoise; I had learned from the latter, when I was five years old, that one did not say "the Tarn" but "the Tar"; not "Béarn" but "Béar." The effect of which was that at twenty, when I began to go into society, I had no need to be taught there that one ought not to say, like Mme. Bontemps: "Madame de Béarn."

It would be untrue to pretend that of this territorial and semi-peasant quality which survived in her the Duchess was not fully conscious, indeed she displayed a certain affectation in emphasising it. But, on her part, this was not so much the false simplicity of a great lady aping the countrywoman or the pride of a Duchess bent upon snubbing the rich ladies who express contempt for the peasants whom they do not know as the almost artistic preference of a woman who knows the charm of what

THE CAPTIVE

belongs to her, and is not going to spoil it with a coat of modern varnish. In the same way, everybody will remember at Dives a Norman innkeeper, landlord of the Guillaume le Conquéran, who carefully refrained—which is very rare—from giving his hostelry the modern comforts of an hotel, and, albeit a millionaire, retained the speech, the blouse of a Norman peasant and allowed you to enter his kitchen and watch him prepare with his own hands, as in a farmhouse, a dinner which was nevertheless infinitely better and even more expensive than are the dinners in the most luxurious hotels.

All the local sap that survives in the old noble families is not enough, there must also be born of them a person of sufficient intelligence not to despise it, not to conceal it beneath the varnish of society. Mme. de Guermantes, unfortunately clever and Parisian, who, when I first knew her, retained nothing of her native soil but its accent, had at least, when she wished to describe her life as a girl, found for her speech one of those compromises (between what would have seemed too spontaneously provincial on the one hand or artificially literary on the other), one of those compromises which form the attraction of George Sand's *La Petite Fadette* or of certain legends preserved by Chateaubriand in his *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*. My chief pleasure was in hearing her tell some anecdote which brought peasants into the picture with herself. The historic names, the old customs gave to these blendings of the castle with the village a distinctly attractive savour. Having remained in contact with the lands over which it once ruled, a certain class of the nobility has remained regional, with the result that the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

simplest remark unrolls before our eyes a political and physical map of the whole history of France.

If there was no affectation, no desire to fabricate a special language, then this manner of pronouncing words was a regular museum of French history displayed in conversation. "My great-uncle Fitt-jam" was not at all surprising, for we know that the Fitz-James family are proud to boast that they are French nobles, and do not like to hear their name pronounced in the English fashion. One must, incidentally, admire the touching docility of the people who had previously supposed themselves obliged to pronounce certain names phonetically, and who, all of a sudden, after hearing the Duchesse de Guermantes pronounce them otherwise, adopted the pronunciation which they could never have guessed. Thus the Duchess, who had had a great-grandfather in the suite of the Comte de Chambord, liked to tease her husband for having turned Orleanist by proclaiming: "We old Frochedorf people. . . ." The visitor, who had always imagined that he was correct in saying "Frohsdorf," at once turned his coat, and ever afterwards might be heard saying "Frochedorf."

On one occasion when I asked Mme. de Guermantes who a young blood was whom she had introduced to me as her nephew but whose name I had failed to catch, I was none the wiser when from the back of her throat the Duchess uttered in a very loud but quite inarticulate voice: "*C'est l'... i Eon... l...b... frère à Robert.*" He makes out that he has the same shape of skull as the ancient Gauls." Then I realised that she had said: "*C'est le petit Léon,*" and that this was the Prince de Léon, who was indeed Robert de Saint-Loup's brother-

THE CAPTIVE

in-law. "I know nothing about his skull," she went on, "but the way he dresses, and I must say he does dress quite well, is not at all in the style of those parts. Once when I was staying at Josselin, with the Rohans, we all went over to one of the pilgrimages, where there were peasants from every part of Brittany. A great hulking fellow from one of the Léon villages stood gaping open-mouthed at Robert's brother-in-law in his beige breeches! 'What are you staring at me like that for?' said Léon, 'I bet you don't know who I am?' The peasant admitted that he did not. 'Very well,' said Léon, 'I'm your Prince.' 'Oh!' said the peasant, taking off his cap and apologising. 'I thought you were an *Englische*.'"

And if, taking this opportunity, I led Mme. de Guermentes on to talk about the Rohans (with whom her own family had frequently intermarried), her conversation would become impregnated with a hint of the wistful charm of the Pardons, and (as that true poet Pampille would say) with "the harsh savour of pancakes of black grain fried over a fire of rushes."

Of the Marquis du Lau (whose tragic decline we all know, when, himself deaf, he used to be taken to call on Mme. H... who was blind), she would recall the less tragic years when, after the day's sport, at Guermentes, he would change into slippers before taking tea with the Prince of Wales, to whom he would not admit himself inferior, and with whom, as we see, he stood upon no ceremony. She described all this so picturesquely that she seemed to invest him with the plumed musketeer bonnet of the somewhat vainglorious gentlemen of the Périgord.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

But even in the mere classification of different people, her care to distinguish and indicate their native provinces was in Mme. de Guermantes, when she was her natural self, a great charm which a Parisian-born woman could never have acquired, and those simple names Anjou, Poitou, the Périgord, filled her conversation with pictorial landscapes.

To revert to the pronunciation and vocabulary of Mme. de Guermantes, it is in this aspect that the nobility shews itself truly conservative, with everything that the word implies at once somewhat puerile and somewhat perilous, stubborn in its resistance to evolution but interesting also to an artist. I was anxious to know the original spelling of the name Jean. I learned it when I received a letter from a nephew of Mme. de Villeparisis who signs himself—as he was christened, as he figures in Gotha—Jehan de Villeparisis, with the same handsome, superfluous, heraldic H that we admire, illuminated in vermilion or ultramarine in a Book of Hours or in a window.

Unfortunately, I never had time to prolong these visits indefinitely, for I was anxious, if possible, not to return home after my mistress. But it was only in dribblets that I was able to obtain from Mme. de Guermantes that information as to her garments which was of use in helping me to order garments similar in style, so far as it was possible for a young girl to wear them, for Albertine. "For instance, Madame, that evening when you dined with Mme. de Saint-Euverte, and then went on to the Princesse de Guermantes, you had a dress that was all red, with red shoes, you were marvellous, you reminded me of a sort of great blood-red blossom, a blazing ruby

THE CAPTIVE

—now, what was that dress? Is it the sort of thing that a girl can wear?"

The Duchess, imparting to her tired features the radiant expression that the *Princesse des Laumes* used to assume when *Swann*, in years past, paid her compliments, looked, with tears of merriment in her eyes, quizzingly, questioningly and delightedly at *M. de Bréauté* who was always there at that hour and who set beaming from behind his monocle a smile that seemed to pardon this outburst of intellectual trash for the sake of the physical excitement of youth which seemed to him to lie beneath it. The Duchess appeared to be saying: "What is the matter with him? He must be mad." Then turning to me with a coaxing air: "I wasn't aware that I looked like a blazing ruby or a blood-red blossom, but I do remember, as it happens, that I had on a red dress: it was red satin, which was being worn that season. Yes, a girl can wear that sort of thing at a pinch, but you told me that your friend never went out in the evening. That is a full evening dress, not a thing that she can put on to pay calls."

What is extraordinary is that of the evening in question, which after all was not so very remote, *Mme. de Guermantes* should remember nothing but what she had been wearing, and should have forgotten a certain incident which nevertheless, as we shall see presently, ought to have mattered to her greatly. It seems that among men and women of action (and people in society are men and women of action on a minute, a microscopic scale, but are nevertheless men and women of action), the mind, overcharged by the need of attending to what is going to happen in an hour's time, confides only a

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

very few things to the memory. As often as not, for instance, it was not with the object of putting his questioner in the wrong and making himself appear not to have been mistaken that M. de Norpois, when you reminded him of the prophecies he had uttered with regard to an alliance with Germany of which nothing had ever come, would say: "You must be mistaken, I have no recollection of it whatever, it is not like me, for in that sort of conversation I am always most laconic, and I would never have predicted the success of one of those *coups d'éclat* which are often nothing more than *coups de tête* and almost always degenerate into *coups de force*. It is beyond question that in the remote future a Franco-German *rapprochement* might come into being and would be highly profitable to both countries, nor would France have the worse of the bargain, I dare say, but I have never spoken of it because the fruit is not yet ripe, and if you wish to know my opinion, in asking our late enemies to join with us in solemn wedlock, I consider that we should be setting out to meet a severe rebuff, and that the attempt could end only in disaster." In saying this M. de Norpois was not being untruthful, he had simply forgotten. We quickly forget what we have not deeply considered, what has been dictated to us by the spirit of imitation, by the passions of our neighbours. These change, and with them our memory undergoes alteration. Even more than diplomats, politicians are unable to remember the point of view which they adopted at a certain moment, and some of their palinodes are due less to a surfeit of ambition than to a shortage of memory. As for people in society, there are very few things that they remember.

THE CAPTIVE

Mme. de Guermantes assured me that, at the party to which she had gone in a red gown, she did not remember Mme. de Chaussepierre's being present, and that I must be mistaken. And yet, heaven knows, the Chaussepierres had been present enough in the minds of both Duke and Duchess since then. For the following reason. M. de Guermantes had been the senior vice-president of the Jockey, when the president died. Certain members of the club who were not popular in society and whose sole pleasure was to blackball the men who did not invite them to their houses started a campaign against the Duc de Guermantes who, certain of being elected, and relatively indifferent to the presidency which was a small matter for a man in his social position, paid no attention. It was urged against him that the Duchess was a Dreyfusard (the Dreyfus case had long been concluded, but twenty years later people were still talking about it, and so far only two years had elapsed), and entertained the Rothschilds, that too much consideration had been shewn of late to certain great international magnates like the Duc de Guermantes, who was half German. The campaign found its ground well prepared, clubs being always jealous of men who are in the public eye, and detesting great fortunes.

Chaussepierre's own fortune was no mere pittance, but nobody could take offence at it; he never spent a penny, the couple lived in a modest apartment, the wife went about dressed in black serge. A passionate music-lover, she did indeed give little afternoon parties to which many more singers were invited than to the Guermantes. But no one ever mentioned these parties, no refreshments were served, the husband did not put in an appearance even,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

and everything went off quite quietly in the obscurity of the Rue de la Chaise. At the Opera, Mme. de Chaussepierre passed unnoticed, always among people whose names recalled the most "die-hard" element of the intimate circle of Charles X, but people quite obsolete, who went nowhere. On the day of the election, to the general surprise, obscurity triumphed over renown: Chaussepierre, the second vice-president, was elected president of the Jockey, and the Duc de Guermantes was left sitting—that is to say, in the senior vice-president's chair. Of course, being president of the Jockey means little or nothing to Princes of the highest rank such as the Guermantes. But not to be it when it is your turn, to see preferred to you a Chaussepierre to whose wife Oriane, two years earlier, had not merely refused to bow but had taken offence that an unknown scarecrow like that should bow to her, this the Duke did find hard to endure. He pretended to be superior to this rebuff, asserting moreover that it was his long-standing friendship with Swann that was at the root of it. Actually, his anger never cooled.

One curious thing was that nobody had ever before heard the Duc de Guermantes make use of the quite commonplace expression "out and out," but ever since the Jockey election, whenever anybody referred to the Dreyfus case, pat would come "out and out." "Dreyfus case, Dreyfus case, that's soon said, and it's a misuse of the term. It is not a question of religion, it's *out and out* a political matter." Five years might go by without your hearing him say "out and out" again, if during that time nobody mentioned the Dreyfus case, but if, at the end of five years, the name Dreyfus cropped up, "out and

THE CAPTIVE

out" would at once follow automatically. The Duke could not, anyhow, bear to hear any mention of the case, "which has been responsible," he would say, "for so many disasters" albeit he was really conscious of one and one only; his own failure to become president of the Jockey. And so on the afternoon in question, when I reminded Madame de Guermantes of the red gown that she had worn at her cousin's party, M. de Bréauté was none too well received when, determined to say something, by an association of ideas which remained obscure and which he did not illuminate, he began, twisting his tongue about between his pursed lips: "Talking of the Dreyfus case—" (why in the world of the Dreyfus case, we were talking simply of a red dress, and certainly poor Bréauté, whose only desire was to make himself agreeable, can have had no malicious intention). But the mere name of Dreyfus made the Duc de Guermantes knit his Jupiterian brows. "I was told," Bréauté went on, "a jolly good thing, damned clever, 'pon my word, that was said by our friend Cartier" (we must warn the reader that this Cartier, Mme. de Villefranche's brother, was in no way related to the jeweller of that name) "not that I'm in the least surprised, for he's got plenty of brains to spare." "Oh!" broke in Oriane, "he can spare me his brains. I hardly like to tell you how much your friend Cartier has always bored me, and I have never been able to understand the boundless charm that Charles de La Trémoille and his wife seem to find in the creature, for I meet him there every time that I go to their house." "My dear Dutt-yess," replied Bréauté, who was unable to pronounce the soft *c*, "I think you are very hard upon Cartier. It is true that he has perhaps made him-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

self rather too mutt-y-at home at the La Trémoilles', but after all he does provide Tyarles with a sort of—what shall I say?—a sort of *fidus Achates*, which has become a very rare bird indeed in these days. Anyhow, this is the story as it was told to me. Cartier appears to have said that if M. Zola had gone out of his way to stand his trial and to be convicted, it was in order to enjoy the only sensation he had never yet tried, that of being in prison." "And so he ran away before they could arrest him," Oriane broke in. "Your story don't hold water. Besides, even if it was plausible, I think his remark absolutely idiotic. If that's what you call being witty!" "Good grate-ious, my dear Oriane," replied Bréauté who, finding himself contradicted, was beginning to lose confidence, "it's not my remark, I'm telling you it as it was told to me, take it for what it's worth. Anyhow, it earned M. Cartier a first rate blowing up from that excellent fellow La Trémoille who, and quite rightly, does not like people to discuss what one might call, so to speak, current events, in his drawing-room, and was all the more annoyed because Mme. Alphonse Rothschild was present. Cartier had to listen to a positive jobation from La Trémoille." "I should think so," said the Duke, in the worst of tempers, "the Alphonse Rothschilds, even if they have the tact never to speak of that abominable affair, are Dreyfusards at heart, like all the Jews. Indeed that is an argument *ad hominem*" (the Duke was a trifle vague in his use of the expression *ad hominem*) "which is not sufficiently made use of to prove the dishonesty of the Jews. If a Frenchman robs or murders somebody, I do not consider myself bound, because he is a Frenchman like myself, to find him innocent. But the Jews will

THE CAPTIVE

never admit that one of their fellow-countrymen is a traitor, although they know it perfectly well, and never think of the terrible repercussions" (the Duke was thinking, naturally, of that accursed defeat by Chaussepierre) "which the crime of one of their people can bring even to . . . Come, Oriane, you're not going to pretend that it ain't damning to the Jews that they all support a traitor. You're not going to tell me that it ain't because they're Jews." "Of course not," retorted Oriane (feeling, with a trace of irritation, a certain desire to hold her own against Jupiter Tonans and also to set "intellect" above the Dreyfus case). "Perhaps it is just because they are Jews and know their own race that they realise that a person can be a Jew and not necessarily a traitor and anti-French, as M. Drumont seems to maintain. Certainly, if he'd been a Christian, the Jews wouldn't have taken any interest in him, but they did so because they knew quite well that if he hadn't been a Jew people wouldn't have been so ready to think him a traitor *a priori*, as my nephew Robert would say." "Women never understand a thing about politics," exclaimed the Duke, fastening his gaze upon the Duchess. "That shocking crime is not simply a Jewish cause, but *out and out* an affair of vast national importance which may lead to the most appalling consequences for France, which ought to have driven out all the Jews, whereas I am sorry to say that the measures taken up to the present have been directed (in an ignoble fashion, which will have to be overruled) not against them but against the most eminent of their adversaries, against men of the highest rank, who have been flung into the gutter, to the ruin of our unhappy country."

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

I felt that the conversation had taken a wrong turning and reverted hurriedly to the topic of clothes.

"Do you remember, Madame," I said, "the first time that you were friendly with me?" "The first time that I was friendly with him," she repeated, turning with a smile to M. de Bréauté, the tip of whose nose grew more pointed, his smile more tender out of politeness to Mme. de Guermantes, while his voice, like a knife on the grindstone, emitted various vague and rusty sounds. "You were wearing a yellow gown with big black flowers." "But, my dear boy, that's the same thing, those are evening dresses." "And your hat with the cornflowers that I liked so much! Still, those are all things of the past. I should like to order for the girl I mentioned to you a fur cloak like the one you had on yesterday morning. Would it be possible for me to see it?" "Of course; Hannibal has to be going in a moment. You shall come to my room and my maid will shew you anything you want to look at. Only, my dear boy, though I shall be delighted to lend you anything, I must warn you that if you have things from Callot's or Doucet's or Paquin's copied by some small dressmaker, the result is never the same." "But I never dreamed of going to a small dressmaker, I know quite well it wouldn't be the same thing, but I should be interested to hear you explain why." "You know quite well I can never explain anything, I am a perfect fool, I talk like a peasant. It is a question of handiwork, of style; as far as furs go, I can at least give you a line to my furrier, so that he shan't rob you. But you realise that even then it will cost you eight or nine thousand francs." "And that indoor gown that you were wearing the other evening, with such a

THE CAPTIVE

curious smell, dark, fluffy, speckled, streaked with gold like a butterfly's wing?" "Ah! That is one of Fortuny's. Your young lady can quite well wear that in the house. I have heaps of them; you shall see them presently, in fact I can give you one or two if you like. But I should like you to see one that my cousin Talleyrand has. I must write to her for the loan of it." "But you had such charming shoes as well, are they Fortuny's too?" "No, I know the ones you mean, they are made of some gilded kid we came across in London, when I was shopping with Consuelo Manchester. It was amazing. I could never make out how they did it, it was just like a golden skin, simply that with a tiny diamond in front. The poor Duchess of Manchester is dead, but if it's any help to you I can write and ask Lady Warwick or the Duchess of Marlborough to try and get me some more. I wonder, now, if I haven't a piece of the stuff left. You might be able to have a pair made here. I shall look for it this evening, and let you know."

As I endeavoured as far as possible to leave the Duchess before Albertine had returned, it often happened that I met in the courtyard as I came away from her door M. de Charlus and Morel on their way to take tea at Jupien's, a supreme favour for the Baron. I did not encounter them every day but they went there every day. Here we may perhaps remark that the regularity of a habit is generally in proportion to its absurdity. The sensational things, we do as a rule only by fits and starts. But the senseless life, in which the maniac deprives himself of all pleasure and inflicts the greatest discomforts upon himself, is the type that alters least. Every ten years, if we had the curiosity to inquire, we should find

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the poor wretch still asleep at the hours when he might be living his life, going out at the hours when there is nothing to do but let oneself be murdered in the streets, sipping iced drinks when he is hot, still trying desperately to cure a cold. A slight impulse of energy, for a single day, would be sufficient to change these habits for good and all. But the fact is that this sort of life is almost always the appanage of a person devoid of energy. Vices are another aspect of these monotonous existences which the exercise of will power would suffice to render less painful. These two aspects might be observed simultaneously when M. de Charlus came every day with Morel to take tea at Jupien's. A single outburst had marred this daily custom. The tailor's niece having said one day to Morel: "That's all right then, come to-morrow and I'll stand you a tea," the Baron had quite justifiably considered this expression very vulgar on the lips of a person whom he regarded as almost a prospective daughter-in-law, but as he enjoyed being offensive and became carried away by his own anger, instead of simply saying to Morel that he begged him to give her a lesson in polite manners, the whole of their homeward walk was a succession of violent scenes. In the most insolent, the most arrogant tone: "So your 'touch' which, I can see, is not necessarily allied to 'tact,' has hindered the normal development of your sense of smell, since you could allow that fetid expression 'stand a tea'—at fifteen centimes, I suppose—to waft its stench of sewage to my regal nostrils? When you have come to the end of a violin solo, have you ever seen yourself in my house rewarded with a fart, instead of frenzied applause, or a silence more eloquent still, since it is due to exhaustion from the

THE CAPTIVE

effort to restrain, not what your young woman lavishes upon you, but the sob that you have brought to my lips?"

When a public official has had similar reproaches heaped upon him by his chief, he invariably loses his post next day. Nothing, on the contrary, could have been more painful to M. de Charlus than to dismiss Morel, and, fearing indeed that he had gone a little too far, he began to sing the girl's praises in detailed terms, with an abundance of good taste mingled with impertinence. "She is charming; as you are a musician, I suppose that she seduced you by her voice, which is very beautiful in the high notes, where she seems to await the accompaniment of your B sharp. Her lower register appeals to me less, and that must bear some relation to the triple rise of her strange and slender throat, which when it seems to have come to an end begins again; but these are trivial details, it is her outline that I admire. And as she is a dressmaker and must be handy with her scissors, you must make her give me a charming silhouette of herself cut out in paper."

Charlie had paid but little attention to this eulogy, the charms which it extolled in his betrothed having completely escaped his notice. But he said, in reply to M. de Charlus: "That's all right, my boy, I shall tell her off properly, and she won't talk like that again." If Morel addressed M. de Charlus thus as his "boy," it was not that the good-looking violinist was unaware that his own years numbered barely a third of the Baron's. Nor did he use the expression as Jupien would have done, but with that simplicity which in certain relations postulates that a suppression of the difference in age has tacitly preceded affection. A feigned affection on Morel's part. In

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

others, a sincere affection. Thus, about this time M. de Charlus received a letter worded as follows: "My dear Palamède, when am I going to see thee again? I am longing terribly for thee and always thinking of thee. PIERRE." M. de Charlus racked his brains to discover which of his relatives it could be that took the liberty of addressing him so familiarly, and must consequently know him intimately, although he failed to recognise the handwriting. All the Princes to whom the Almanach de Gotha accords a few lines passed in procession for days on end through his mind. And then, all of a sudden, an address written on the back of the letter enlightened him: the writer was the page at a gambling club to which M. de Charlus sometimes went. This page had not felt that he was being discourteous in writing in this tone to M. de Charlus, for whom on the contrary he felt the deepest respect. But he thought that it would not be civil not to address in the second person singular a gentleman who had many times kissed one, and thereby—he imagined in his simplicity—bestowed his affection. M. de Charlus was really delighted by this familiarity. He even brought M. de Vaugoubert away from an afternoon party in order to shew him the letter. And yet, heaven knows that M. de Charlus did not care to go about with M. de Vaugoubert. For the latter, his monocle in his eye, kept gazing in all directions at every passing youth. What was worse, emancipating himself when he was with M. de Charlus, he employed a form of speech which the Baron detested. He gave feminine endings to all the masculine words and, being intensely stupid, imagined this pleantry to be extremely witty, and was continually in fits of laughter. As at the same time he attached enormous

THE CAPTIVE

importance to his position in the diplomatic service, these deplorable outbursts of merriment in the street were perpetually interrupted by the shock caused him by the simultaneous appearance of somebody in society, or, worse still, of a civil servant. "That little telegraph messenger," he said, nudging the disgusted Baron with his elbow, "I used to know her, but she's turned respectable, the wretch! Oh, that messenger from the Galleries Lafayette, what a dream! Good God, there's the head of the Commercial Department. I hope he didn't notice anything. He's quite capable of mentioning it to the Minister, who would put me on the retired list, all the more as, it appears, he's so himself." M. de Charlus was speechless with rage. At length, to bring this infuriating walk to an end, he decided to produce the letter and give it to the Ambassador to read, but warned him to be discreet, for he liked to pretend that Charlie was jealous, in order to be able to make people think that he was enamoured. "And," he added with an indescribable air of benevolence, "we ought always to try to cause as little trouble as possible." Before we come back to Jupien's shop, the author would like to say how deeply he would regret it should any reader be offended by his portrayal of such unusual characters. On the one hand (and this is the less important aspect of the matter), it may be felt that the aristocracy is, in these pages, disproportionately accused of degeneracy in comparison with the other classes of society. Were this true, it would be in no way surprising. The oldest families end by displaying, in a red and bulbous nose, or a deformed chin, characteristic signs in which everyone admires "blood." But among these persistent and perpetually developing

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

features, there are others that are not visible, to wit tendencies and tastes. It would be a more serious objection, were there any foundation for it, to say that all this is alien to us, and that we ought to extract truth from the poetry that is close at hand. Art extracted from the most familiar reality does indeed exist and its domain is perhaps the largest of any. But it is no less true that a strong interest, not to say beauty, may be found in actions inspired by a cast of mind so remote from anything that we feel, from anything that we believe, that we cannot ever succeed in understanding them, that they are displayed before our eyes like a spectacle without rhyme or reason. What could be more poetic than Xerxes, son of Darius, ordering the sea to be scourged with rods for having engulfed his fleet?

We may be certain that Morel, relying on the influence which his personal attractions gave him over the girl, communicated to her, as coming from himself, the Baron's criticism, for the expression "stand you a tea" disappeared as completely from the tailor's shop as disappears from a drawing-room some intimate friend who used to call daily, and with whom, for one reason or another, we have quarrelled, or whom we are trying to keep out of sight and meet only outside the house. M. de Charlus was satisfied by the cessation of "stand you a tea." He saw in it a proof of his own ascendancy over Morel and the removal of its one little blemish from the girl's perfection. In short, like everyone of his kind, while genuinely fond of Morel and of the girl who was all but engaged to him, an ardent advocate of their marriage, he thoroughly enjoyed his power to create at his pleasure more or less inoffensive little scenes, aloof from and

THE CAPTIVE

above which he himself remained as Olympian as his brother.

Morel had told M. de Charlus that he was in love with Jupien's niece, and wished to marry her, and the Baron liked to accompany his young friend upon visits in which he played the part of father-in-law to be, indulgent and discreet. Nothing pleased him better.

My personal opinion is that "stand you a tea" had originated with Morel himself, and that in the blindness of her love the young seamstress had adopted an expression from her beloved which clashed horribly with her own pretty way of speaking. This way of speaking, the charming manners that went with it, the patronage of M. de Charlus brought it about that many customers for whom she had worked received her as a friend, invited her to dinner, introduced her to their friends, though the girl accepted their invitations only with the Baron's permission and on the evenings that suited him. "A young seamstress received in society?" the reader will exclaim, "how improbable!" If you come to think of it, it was no less improbable that at one time Albertine should have come to see me at midnight, and that she should now be living in my house. And yet this might perhaps have been improbable of anyone else, but not of Albertine, a fatherless and motherless orphan, leading so uncontrolled a life that at first I had taken her, at Balbec, for the mistress of a bicyclist, a girl whose next of kin was Mme. Bontemps who in the old days, at Mme. Swann's, had admired nothing about her niece but her bad manners and who now shut her eyes, especially if by doing so she might be able to get rid of her by securing for her a wealthy marriage from which a little of the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

wealth would trickle into the aunt's pocket (in the highest society, a mother who is very well-born and quite penniless, when she has succeeded in finding a rich bride for her son, allows the young couple to support her, accepts presents of furs, a motor-car, money from a daughter-in-law whom she does not like but whom she introduces to her friends).

The day may come when dressmakers—nor should I find it at all shocking—will move in society. Jupien's niece being an exception affords us no base for calculation, for one swallow does not make a summer. In any case, if the very modest advancement of Jupien's niece did scandalise some people, Morel was not among them, for, in certain respects, his stupidity was so intense that not only did he label "rather a fool" this girl a thousand times cleverer than himself, and foolish only perhaps in her love for himself, but he actually took to be adventuresses, dressmakers' assistants in disguise playing at being ladies, the persons of rank and position who invited her to their houses and whose invitations she accepted without a trace of vanity. Naturally these were not Guermantes, nor even people who knew the Guermantes, but rich and smart women of the middle-class, broad-minded enough to feel that it is no disgrace to invite a dressmaker to your house and at the same time servile enough to derive some satisfaction from patronising a girl whom His Highness the Baron de Charlus was in the habit—without any suggestion, of course, of impropriety—of visiting daily.

Nothing could have pleased the Baron more than the idea of this marriage, for he felt that in this way Morel would not be taken from him. It appears that Jupien's

THE CAPTIVE

niece had been, when scarcely more than a child, "in trouble." And M. de Charlus, while he sang her praises to Morel, would have had no hesitation in revealing this secret to his friend, who would be furious, and thus sowing the seeds of discord. For M. de Charlus, although terribly malicious, resembled a great many good people who sing the praises of some man or woman, as a proof of their own generosity, but would avoid like poison the soothing words, so rarely uttered, that would be capable of putting an end to strife. Notwithstanding this, the Baron refrained from making any insinuation, and for two reasons. "If I tell him," he said to himself, "that his ladylove is not spotless, his vanity will be hurt, he will be angry with me. Besides, how am I to know that he is not in love with her? If I say nothing, this fire of straw will burn itself out before long, I shall be able to control their relations as I choose, he will love her only to the extent that I shall allow. If I tell him of his young lady's past transgression, who knows that my Charlie is not still sufficiently enamoured of her to become jealous. Then I shall by my own doing be converting a harmless and easily controlled flirtation into a serious passion, which is a difficult thing to manage." For these reasons, M. de Charlus preserved a silence which had only the outward appearance of discretion, but was in another respect meritorious, since it is almost impossible for men of his sort to hold their tongues.

Anyhow, the girl herself was charming, and M. de Charlus, who found that she satisfied all the aesthetic interest that he was capable of feeling in women, would have liked to have hundreds of photographs of her. Not such a fool as Morel, he was delighted to hear the names

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

of the ladies who invited her to their houses, and whom his social instinct was able to place, but he took care (as he wished to retain his power) not to mention this to Charlie who, a regular idiot in this respect, continued to believe that, apart from the "violin class" and the Verdurins, there existed only the Guermantes, and the few almost royal houses enumerated by the Baron, all the rest being but "dregs" or "scum." Charlie interpreted these expressions of M. de Charlus literally.

Among the reasons which made M. de Charlus look forward to the marriage of the young couple was this, that Jupien's niece would then be in a sense an extension of Morel's personality, and so of the Baron's power over and knowledge of him. As for "betraying" in the conjugal sense the violinist's future wife, it would never for a moment have occurred to M. de Charlus to feel the slightest scruple about that. But to have a "young couple" to manage, to feel himself the redoubtable and all-powerful protector of Morel's wife, who if she regarded the Baron as a god would thereby prove that Morel had inculcated this idea into her, and would thus contain in herself something of Morel, added a new variety to the form of M. de Charlus's domination and brought to light in his "creature," Morel, a creature the more, that is to say gave the Baron something different, new, curious, to love in him. Perhaps even this domination would be stronger now than it had ever been. For whereas Morel by himself, naked so to speak, often resisted the Baron whom he felt certain of reconquering, once he was married, the thought of his home, his house, his future would alarm him more quickly, he would offer to M. de Charlus's desires a wider surface, an easier hold.

THE CAPTIVE

All this, and even, failing anything else, on evenings when he was bored, the prospect of stirring up trouble between husband and wife (the Baron had never objected to battle-pictures) was pleasing to him. Less pleasing, however, than the thought of the state of dependence upon himself in which the young people would live. M. de Charlus's love for Morel acquired a delicious novelty when he said to himself: "His wife too will be mine just as much as he is, they will always take care not to annoy me, they will obey my caprices, and thus she will be a sign (which hitherto I have failed to observe) of what I had almost forgotten, what is so very dear to my heart, that to all the world, to everyone who sees that I protect them, house them, to myself, Morel is mine." This testimony in the eyes of the world and in his own pleased M. de Charlus more than anything. For the possession of what we love is an even greater joy than love itself. Very often those people who conceal this possession from the world do so only from the fear that the beloved object may be taken from them. And their happiness is diminished by this prudent reticence.

The reader may remember that Morel had once told the Baron that his great ambition was to seduce some young girl, and this girl in particular, that to succeed in his enterprise he would promise to marry her, and, the outrage accomplished, would "cut his hook"; but this confession, what with the declarations of love for Jupien's niece which Morel had come and poured out to him, M. de Charlus had forgotten. What was more, Morel had quite possibly forgotten it himself. There was perhaps a real gap between Morel's nature—as he had cynically admitted, perhaps even artfully exaggerated it—and the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

moment at which it would regain control of him. As he became better acquainted with the girl, she had appealed to him, he began to like her. He knew himself so little that he doubtless imagined that he was in love with her, perhaps indeed that he would be in love with her always. To be sure his initial desire, his criminal intention remained, but glossed over by so many layers of sentiment that there is nothing to shew that the violinist would not have been sincere in saying that this vicious desire was not the true motive of his action. There was, moreover, a brief period during which, without his actually admitting it to himself, this marriage appeared to him to be necessary. Morel was suffering at the time from violent cramp in the hand, and found himself obliged to contemplate the possibility of his having to give up the violin. As, in everything but his art, he was astonishingly lazy, the question who was to maintain him loomed before him, and he preferred that it should be Jupien's niece rather than M. de Charlus, this arrangement offering him greater freedom and also a wider choice of several kinds of women, ranging from the apprentices, perpetually changing, whom he would make Jupien's niece debauch for him, to the rich and beautiful ladies to whom he would prostitute her. That his future wife might refuse to lend herself to these arrangements, that she could be so perverse never entered Morel's calculations for a moment. However, they passed into the background, their place being taken by pure love, now that his cramp had ceased. His violin would suffice, together with his allowance from M. de Charlus, whose claims upon him would certainly be reduced once he, Morel, was married to the girl. Marriage was the urgent

THE CAPTIVE

thing, because of his love, and in the interest of his freedom. He made a formal offer of marriage to Jupien, who consulted his niece. This was wholly unnecessary. The girl's passion for the violinist streamed round about her, like her hair when she let it down, like the joy in her beaming eyes. In Morel, almost everything that was agreeable or advantageous to him awakened moral emotions and words to correspond, sometimes even melting him to tears. It was therefore sincerely—if such a word can be applied to him—that he addressed Jupien's niece in speeches as steeped in sentimentality (sentimental too are the speeches that so many young noblemen who look forward to a life of complete idleness address to some charming daughter of a middle-class millionaire) as had been steeped in unredeemed vileness the speech he had made to M. de Charlus about the seduction and deflowering of a virgin. Only there was another side to this virtuous enthusiasm for a person who afforded him pleasure and the solemn engagement that he made with her. As soon as the person ceased to afford him pleasure, or indeed if, for example, the obligation to fulfil the promise that he had made caused him displeasure, she at once became the object of an antipathy which he justified in his own eyes and which, after some neurasthenic disturbance, enabled him to prove to himself, as soon as the balance of his nervous system was restored, that he was, even looking at the matter from a purely virtuous point of view, released from any obligation. Thus, towards the end of his stay at Balbec, he had managed somehow to lose all his money and, not daring to mention the matter to M. de Charlus, looked about for some one to whom he might appeal. He had learned

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

from his father (who at the same time had forbidden him ever to become a "sponger") that in such circumstances the correct thing is to write to the person whom you intend to ask for a loan, "that you have to speak to him on business," to "ask him for a business appointment." This magic formula had so enchanted Morel that he would, I believe, have been glad to lose his money, simply to have the pleasure of asking for an appointment "on business." In the course of his life he had found that the formula had not quite the virtue that he supposed. He had discovered that certain people, to whom otherwise he would never have written at all, did not reply within five minutes of receiving his letter asking to speak to them "on business." If the afternoon went by without his receiving an answer, it never occurred to him that, to put the best interpretation on the matter, it was quite possible that the gentleman addressed had not yet come home, or had had other letters to write, if indeed he had not gone away from home altogether, fallen ill, or something of that sort. If by an extraordinary stroke of fortune Morel was given an appointment for the following morning, he would accost his intended creditor with: "I was quite surprised not to get an answer, I was wondering if there was anything wrong with you, I'm glad to see you're quite well," and so forth. Well then, at Balbec, and without telling me that he wished to talk "business" to him, he had asked me to introduce him to that very Bloch to whom he had made himself so unpleasant a week earlier in the train. Bloch had not hesitated to lend him—or rather to secure a loan for him, from M. Nissim Bernard, of five thousand francs. From that moment Morel had worshipped Bloch. He

THE CAPTIVE

asked himself with tears in his eyes how he could shew his indebtedness to a person who had saved his life. Finally, I undertook to ask on his behalf for a thousand francs monthly from M. de Charlus, a sum which he would at once forward to Bloch who would thus find himself repaid within quite a short time. The first month, Morel, still under the impression of Bloch's generosity, sent him the thousand francs immediately, but after this he doubtless found that a different application of the remaining four thousand francs might be more satisfactory to himself, for he began to say all sorts of unpleasant things about Bloch. The mere sight of Bloch was enough to fill his mind with dark thoughts, and Bloch himself having forgotten the exact amount that he had lent Morel, and having asked him for 3,500 francs instead of 4,000, which would have left the violinist 500 francs to the good, the latter took the line that, in view of so preposterous a fraud, not only would he not pay another centime but his creditor might think himself very fortunate if Morel did not bring an action against him for slander. As he said this his eyes blazed. He did not content himself with asserting that Bloch and M. Nissim Bernard had no cause for complaint against him, but was soon saying that they might consider themselves lucky that he made no complaint against them. Finally, M. Nissim Bernard having apparently stated that Thibaut played as well as Morel, the last-named decided that he ought to take the matter into court, such a remark being calculated to damage him in his profession, then, as there was no longer any justice in France, especially against the Jews (antisemitism being in Morel the natural effect of a loan of 5,000 francs from an Israelite), took to never

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

going out without a loaded revolver. A similar nervous reaction, in the wake of keen affection, was soon to occur in Morel with regard to the tailor's niece. It is true that M. de Charlus may have been unconsciously responsible, to some extent, for this change, for he was in the habit of saying, without meaning what he said for an instant, and merely to tease them, that, once they were married, he would never set eyes on them again but would leave them to fly upon their own wings. This idea was, in itself, quite insufficient to detach Morel from the girl; but, lurking in his mind, it was ready when the time came to combine with other analogous ideas, capable, once the compound was formed, of becoming a powerful disruptive agent.

It was not very often, however, that I was fated to meet M. de Charlus and Morel. Often they had already passed into Jupien's shop when I came away from the Duchess, for the pleasure that I found in her society was such that I was led to forget not merely the anxious expectation that preceded Albertine's return, but even the hour of that return.

I shall set apart from the other days on which I lingered at Mme. de Guermantes's, one that was distinguished by a trivial incident the cruel significance of which entirely escaped me and did not enter my mind until long afterwards. On this particular afternoon, Mme. de Guermantes had given me, knowing that I was fond of them, some branches of syringa which had been sent to her from the South. When I left the Duchess and went upstairs to our flat, Albertine had already returned, and on the staircase I ran into Andrée who seemed to be dis-

THE CAPTIVE

tressed by the powerful fragrance of the flowers that I was bringing home.

"What, are you back already?" I said. "Only this moment, but Albertine had letters to write, so she sent me away." "You don't think she's up to any mischief?" "Not at all, she's writing to her aunt, I think, but you know how she dislikes strong scents, she won't be particularly pleased to see those syringas." "How stupid of me! I shall tell Françoise to put them out on the service stair." "Do you imagine Albertine won't notice the scent of them on you? Next to tuberoses they've the strongest scent of any flower, I always think; anyhow, I believe Françoise has gone out shopping." "But in that case, as I haven't got my latchkey, how am I to get in?" "Oh, you've only got to ring the bell. Albertine will let you in. Besides, Françoise may have come back by this time."

I said good-bye to Andrée. I had no sooner pressed the bell than Albertine came to open the door, which required some doing, as Françoise had gone out and Albertine did not know where to turn on the light. At length she was able to let me in, but the scent of the syringas put her to flight. I took them to the kitchen, with the result that my mistress, leaving her letter unfinished (why, I did not understand), had time to go to my room, from which she called to me, and to lay herself down on my bed. Even then, at the actual moment, I saw nothing in all this that was not perfectly natural, at the most a little confused, but in any case unimportant. She had nearly been caught out with Andrée and had snatched a brief respite for herself by turning out the lights, going to my room so that I should not see the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

disordered state of her own bed, and pretending to be busy writing a letter. But we shall see all this later on, a situation the truth of which I never ascertained. In general, and apart from this isolated incident, everything was quite normal when I returned from my visit to the Duchess. Since Albertine never knew whether I might not wish to go out with her before dinner, I usually found in the hall her hat, cloak and umbrella, which she had left lying there in case they should be needed. As soon as, on opening the door, I caught sight of them, the atmosphere of the house became breathable once more. I felt that, instead of a rarefied air, it was happiness that filled it. I was rescued from my melancholy, the sight of these trifles gave me possession of Albertine, I ran to greet her.

On the days when I did not go down to Mme. de Guermantes, to pass the time somehow, during the hour that preceded the return of my mistress, I would take up an album of Elstir's work, one of Bergotte's books, Vinteuil's sonata.

Then, just as those works of art which seem to address themselves to the eye or ear alone require that, if we are to enjoy them, our awakened intelligence shall collaborate closely with those organs, I would unconsciously evoke from myself the dreams that Albertine had inspired in me long ago, before I knew her, dreams that had been stifled by the routine of everyday life. I cast them into the composer's phrase or the painter's image as into a crucible, or used them to enrich the book that I was reading. And no doubt the book appeared all the more vivid in consequence. But Albertine herself profited just as much by being thus transported out of one of the two

THE CAPTIVE

worlds to which we have access, and in which we can place alternately the same object, by escaping thus from the crushing weight of matter to play freely in the fluid space of mind. I found myself suddenly and for the instant capable of feeling an ardent desire for this irritating girl. She had at that moment the appearance of a work by Elstir or Bergotte, I felt a momentary enthusiasm for her, seeing her in the perspective of imagination and art.

Presently some one came to tell me that she had returned; though there was a standing order that her name was not to be mentioned if I was not alone, if for instance I had in the room with me Bloch, whom I would compel to remain with me a little longer so that there should be no risk of his meeting my mistress in the hall. For I concealed the fact that she was staying in the house, and even that I ever saw her there, so afraid was I that one of my friends might fall in love with her, and wait for her outside, or that in a momentary encounter in the passage or the hall she might make a signal and fix an appointment. Then I heard the rustle of Albertine's petticoats on her way to her own room, for out of discretion and also no doubt in that spirit in which, when we used to go to dinner at la Raspelière, she took care that I should have no cause for jealousy, she did not come to my room, knowing that I was not alone. But it was not only for this reason, as I suddenly realised. I remembered; I had known a different Albertine, then all at once she had changed into another, the Albertine of to-day. And for this change I could hold no one responsible but myself. The admissions that she would have made to me, easily at first, then deliberately, when we were

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

simply friends, had ceased to flow from her as soon as she had suspected that I was in love with her, or, without perhaps naming Love, had divined the existence in me of an inquisitorial sentiment that desires to know, is pained by the knowledge, and seeks to learn yet more. Ever since that day, she had concealed everything from me. She kept away from my room if she thought that my companion was (rarely as this happened) not male but female, she whose eyes used at one time to sparkle so brightly whenever I mentioned a girl: "You must try and get her to come here. I should like to meet her." "But she has what you call a bad style." "Of course, that makes it all the more fun." At that moment, I might perhaps have learned all that there was to know. And indeed when in the little Casino she had withdrawn her breast from Andrée's, I believe that this was due not to my presence but to that of Cottard, who was capable, she doubtless thought, of giving her a bad reputation. And yet, even then, she had already begun to "set," the confiding speeches no longer issued from her lips, her gestures became reserved. After this, she had stripped herself of everything that could stir my emotions. To those parts of her life of which I knew nothing she ascribed a character the inoffensiveness of which my ignorance made itself her accomplice in accentuating. And now, the transformation was completed, she went straight to her room if I was not alone, not merely from fear of disturbing me, but in order to shew me that she did not care who was with me. There was one thing alone which she would never again do for me, which she would have done only in the days when it would have left me cold, which she would then have done without hesitation

THE CAPTIVE

for that very reason, namely make me a detailed admission. I should always be obliged, like a judge, to draw indefinite conclusions from imprudences of speech that were perhaps not really inexplicable without postulating criminality. And always she would feel that I was jealous, and judging her.

As I listened to Albertine's footsteps with the consoling pleasure of thinking that she would not be going out again that evening, I thought how wonderful it was that for this girl, whom at one time I had supposed that I could never possibly succeed in knowing, the act of returning home every day was nothing else than that of entering my home. The pleasure, a blend of mystery and sensuality, which I had felt, fugitive and fragmentary, at Balbec, on the night when she had come to sleep at the hotel, was completed, stabilised, filled my dwelling, hitherto void, with a permanent store of domestic, almost conjugal bliss (radiating even into the passages) upon which all my senses, either actively, or, when I was alone, in imagination as I waited for her to return, quietly battered. When I had heard the door of Albertine's room shut behind her, if I had a friend with me, I made haste to get rid of him, not leaving him until I was quite sure that he was on the staircase, down which I might even escort him for a few steps. He warned me that I would catch cold, informing me that our house was indeed icy, a cave of the winds, and that he would not live in it if he was paid to do so. This cold weather was a source of complaint because it had just begun, and people were not yet accustomed to it, but for that very reason it released in me a joy accompanied by an unconscious memory of the first evenings of winter when, in past years, returning

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

from the country, in order to reestablish contact with the forgotten delights of Paris, I used to go to a café-concert. And so it was with a song on my lips that, after bidding my friend good-bye, I climbed the stair again and entered the flat. Summer had flown, carrying the birds with it. But other musicians, invisible, internal, had taken their place. And the icy blast against which Bloch had inveighed, which was whistling delightfully through the ill fitting doors of our apartment was (as the fine days of summer by the woodland birds) passionately greeted with snatches, irrepressibly hummed, from Fragson, Mayol or Paulus. In the passage, Albertine was coming towards me. "I say, while I'm taking off my things, I shall send you Andrée, she's looked in for a minute to say how d'ye do." And still swathed in the big grey veil, falling from her chinchilla toque, which I had given her at Balbec, she turned from me and went back to her room, as though she had guessed that Andrée, whom I had charged with the duty of watching over her, would presently, by relating their day's adventures in full detail, mentioning their meeting with some person of their acquaintance, impart a certain clarity of outline to the vague regions in which that excursion had been made which had taken the whole day and which I had been incapable of imagining. Andrée's defects had become more evident; she was no longer as pleasant a companion as when I first knew her. One noticed now, on the surface, a sort of bitter uneasiness, ready to gather like a swell on the sea, merely if I happened to mention something that gave pleasure to Albertine and myself. This did not prevent Andrée from being kinder to me, liking me better—and I have had frequent proof of this—than

THE CAPTIVE

other more sociable people. But the slightest look of happiness on a person's face, if it was not caused by herself, gave a shock to her nerves, as unpleasant as that given by a banging door. She could allow the pains in which she had no part, but not the pleasures; if she saw that I was unwell, she was distressed, was sorry for me, would have stayed to nurse me. But if I displayed a satisfaction as trifling as that of stretching myself with a blissful expression as I shut a book, saying: "Ah! I have spent a really happy afternoon with this entertaining book," these words, which would have given pleasure to my mother, to Albertine, to Saint-Loup, provoked in Andrée a sort of disapprobation, perhaps simply a sort of nervous irritation. My satisfactions caused her an annoyance which she was unable to conceal. These defects were supplemented by others of a more serious nature; one day when I mentioned that young man so learned in matters of racing and golf, so uneducated in all other respects, Andrée said with a sneer: "You know that his father is a swindler, he only just missed being prosecuted. They're swaggering now more than ever, but I tell everybody about it. I should love them to bring an action for slander against me. I should be wonderful in the witness-box!" Her eyes sparkled. Well, I discovered that the father had done nothing wrong, and that Andrée knew this as well as anybody. But she had thought that the son looked down upon her, had sought for something that would embarrass him, put him to shame, had invented a long story of evidence which she imagined herself called upon to give in court, and, by dint of repeating the details to herself, was perhaps no longer aware that they were not true. And so,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

in her present state (and even without her fleeting, foolish hatreds), I should not have wished to see her, were it merely on account of that malicious susceptibility which clasped with a harsh and frigid girdle her warmer and better nature. But the information which she alone could give me about my mistress was of too great interest for me to be able to neglect so rare an opportunity of acquiring it. Andrée came into my room, shutting the door behind her; they had met a girl they knew, whom Albertine had never mentioned to me. "What did they talk about?" "I can't tell you; I took the opportunity, as Albertine wasn't alone, to go and buy some worsted." "Buy some worsted?" "Yes, it was Albertine asked me to get it." "All the more reason not to have gone, it was perhaps a plot to get you out of the way." "But she asked me to go for it before we met her friend." "Ah!" I replied, drawing breath again. At once my suspicion revived; she might, for all I knew, have made an appointment beforehand with her friend and have provided herself with an excuse to be left alone when the time came. Besides, could I be certain that it was not my former hypothesis (according to which Andrée did not always tell me the truth) that was correct? Andrée was perhaps in the plot with Albertine. Love, I used to say to myself, at Balbec, is what we feel for a person whose actions seem rather to arouse our jealousy; we feel that if she were to tell us everything, we might perhaps easily be cured of our love for her. However skillfully jealousy is concealed by him who suffers from it, it is at once detected by her who has inspired it, and who when the time comes is no less skilful. She seeks to lead us off the trail of what might make us unhappy, and

THE CAPTIVE

succeeds, for, to the man who is not forewarned, how should a casual utterance reveal the falsehoods that lie beneath it? We do not distinguish this utterance from the rest; spoken in terror, it is received without attention. Later on, when we are by ourself, we shall return to this speech, it will seem to us not altogether adequate to the facts of the case. But do we remember it correctly? It seems as though there arose spontaneously in us, with regard to it and to the accuracy of our memory, an uncertainty of the sort with which, in certain nervous disorders, we can never remember whether we have bolted the door, no better after the fiftieth time than after the first; it would seem that we can repeat the action indefinitely without its ever being accompanied by a precise and liberating memory. At any rate, we can shut the door again, for the fifty-first time. Whereas the disturbing speech exists in the past in an imperfect hearing of it which it does not lie in our power to repeat. Then we concentrate our attention upon other speeches which conceal nothing and the sole remedy which we do not seek is to be ignorant of everything, so as to have no desire for further knowledge.

As soon as jealousy is discovered, it is regarded by her who is its object as a challenge which authorises deception. Moreover, in our endeavour to learn something, it is we who have taken the initiative in lying and deceit. Andrée, Aimé may promise us that they will say nothing, but will they keep their promise? Bloch could promise nothing because he knew nothing, and Albertine has only to talk to any of the three in order to learn, with the help of what Saint Loup would have called cross-references, that we are lying to her when we pretend to be indifferent

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

to her actions and morally incapable of having her watched. And so, replacing in this way my habitual boundless uncertainty as to what Albertine might be doing, an uncertainty too indeterminate not to remain painless, which was to jealousy what is to grief that beginning of forgetfulness in which relief is born of vagueness, the little fragment of response which Andrée had brought me at once began to raise fresh questions; the only result of my exploration of one sector of the great zone that extended round me had been to banish farther from me that unknowable thing, which, when we seek to form a definite idea of it, another person's life invariably is to us. I continued to question Andrée, while Albertine, from discretion and in order to leave me free (was she conscious of this?) to question the other, prolonged her toilet in her own room. "I think that Albertine's uncle and aunt both like me," I stupidly said to Andrée, forgetting her peculiar nature.

At once I saw her gelatinous features change. Like a syrup that has turned, her face seemed permanently clouded. Her mouth became bitter. Nothing remained in Andrée of that juvenile gaiety which, like all the little band and notwithstanding her feeble health, she had displayed in the year of my first visit to Balbec and which now (it is true that Andrée was now several years older) was so speedily eclipsed in her. But I was to make it reappear involuntarily before Andrée left me that evening to go home to dinner. "Somebody was singing your praises to me to-day in the most glowing language," I said to her. Immediately a ray of joy beamed from her eyes, she looked as though she really loved me. She avoided my gaze but smiled at the empty air with a

THE CAPTIVE

pair of eyes that suddenly became quite round. "Who was it?" she asked, with an artless, avid interest. I told her, and, whoever it was, she was delighted.

Then the time came for us to part, and she left me. Albertine came to my room; she had undressed, and was wearing one of the charming *crêpe de Chine* wrappers, or one of the Japanese gowns which I had asked Mme. de Guermantes to describe to me, and for some of which supplementary details had been furnished me by Mme. Swann, in a letter that began: "After your long eclipse, I felt as I read your letter about my tea-gowns that I was receiving a message from the other world."

Albertine had on her feet a pair of black shoes studded with brilliants which Françoise indignantly called "*pat-tens*," modelled upon the shoes which, from the drawing-room window, she had seen Mme. de Guermantes wearing in the evening, just as a little later Albertine took to wearing slippers, some of gilded kid, others of chinchilla, the sight of which was pleasant to me because they were all of them signs (which other shoes would not have been) that she was living under my roof. She had also certain things which had not come to her from me, including a fine gold ring. I admired upon it the outspread wings of an eagle. "It was my aunt gave me it," she explained. "She can be quite nice sometimes after all. It makes me feel terribly old, because she gave it to me on my twentieth birthday."

Albertine took a far keener interest in all these pretty things than the Duchess, because, like every obstacle in the way of possession (in my own case the ill health which made travel so difficult and so desirable), poverty, more generous than opulence, gives to women what is better

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

than the garments that they cannot afford to buy, the desire for those garments which is the genuine, detailed, profound knowledge of them. She, because she had never been able to afford these things, I, because in ordering them for her I was seeking to give her pleasure, we were both of us like students who already know all about the pictures which they are longing to go to Dresden or Vienna to see. Whereas rich women, amid the multitude of their hats and gowns, are like those tourists to whom the visit to a gallery, being preceded by no desire, gives merely a sensation of bewilderment, boredom and exhaustion.

A particular toque, a particular sable cloak, a particular Doucet wrapper, its sleeves lined with pink, assumed for Albertine, who had observed them, coveted them and, thanks to the exclusiveness and minute nicety that are elements of desire, had at once isolated them from everything else in a void against which the lining or the scarf stood out to perfection, and learned them by heart in every detail—and for myself who had gone to Mme. de Guermantes in quest of an explanation of what constituted the peculiar merit, the superiority, the smartness of the garment and the inimitable style of the great designer—an importance, a charm which they certainly did not possess for the Duchess, surfeited before she had even acquired an appetite and would not, indeed, have possessed for myself had I beheld them a few years earlier while accompanying some lady of fashion on one of her wearisome tours of the dressmakers' shops.

To be sure, a lady of fashion was what Albertine was gradually becoming. For, even if each of the things that I ordered for her was the prettiest of its kind, with all

THE CAPTIVE

the refinements that had been added to it by Mme. de Guermantes or Mme. Swann, she was beginning to possess these things in abundance. But no matter, so long as she admired them from the first, and each of them separately.

When we have been smitten by one painter, then by another, we may end by feeling for the whole gallery an admiration that is not frigid, for it is made up of successive enthusiasms, each one exclusive in its day, which finally have joined forces and become reconciled in one whole.

She was not, for that matter, frivolous, read a great deal when she was by herself, and used to read aloud when she was with me. She had become extremely intelligent. She would say, though she was quite wrong in saying: "I am appalled when I think that but for you I should still be quite ignorant. Don't contradict. You have opened up a world of ideas to me which I never suspected, and whatever I may have become I owe entirely to you."

It will be remembered that she had spoken in similar terms of my influence over Andrée. Had either of them a sentimental regard for me? And, in themselves, what were Albertine and Andrée? To learn the answer, I should have to immobilise you, to cease to live in that perpetual expectation, ending always in a different presentment of you, I should have to cease to love you, in order to fix you, to cease to know your interminable and ever disconcerting arrival, oh girls, oh recurrent ray in the swirl wherein we throb with emotion upon seeing you reappear while barely recognising you, in the dizzy velocity of light. That velocity, we should perhaps re-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

main unaware of it and everything would seem to us motionless, did not a sexual attraction set us in pursuit of you, drops of gold always different, and always passing our expectation! On each occasion a girl so little resembles what she was the time before (shattering in fragments as soon as we catch sight of her the memory that we had retained of her and the desire that we were proposing to gratify), that the stability of nature which we ascribe to her is purely fictitious and a convenience of speech. We have been told that some pretty girl is tender, loving, full of the most delicate sentiments. Our imagination accepts this assurance, and when we behold for the first time, within the woven girdle of her golden hair, the rosy disc of her face, we are almost afraid that this too virtuous sister may chill our ardour by her very virtue, that she can never be to us the lover for whom we have been longing. What secrets, at least, we confide in her from the first moment, on the strength of that nobility of heart, what plans we discuss together. But a few days later, we regret that we were so confiding, for the rose-leaf girl, at our second meeting, addresses us in the language of a lascivious Fury. As for the successive portraits which after a pulsation lasting for some days the renewal of the rosy light presents to us, it is not even certain that a momentum external to these girls has not modified their aspect, and this might well have happened with my band of girls at Balbec.

People extol to us the gentleness, the purity of a virgin. But afterwards they feel that something more seasoned would please us better, and recommend her to shew more boldness. In herself was she one more than the other? Perhaps not, but capable of yielding to any number of

THE CAPTIVE

different possibilities in the headlong current of life. With another girl, whose whole attraction lay in something implacable (which we counted upon subduing to our own will), as, for instance, with the terrible jumping girl at Balbec who grazed in her spring the bald pates of startled old gentlemen, what a disappointment when, in the fresh aspect of her, just as we were addressing her in affectionate speeches stimulated by our memory of all her cruelty to other people, we heard her, as her first move in the game, tell us that she was shy, that she could never say anything intelligent to anyone at a first introduction, so frightened was she, and that it was only after a fortnight or so that she would be able to talk to us at her ease. The steel had turned to cotton, there was nothing left for us to attempt to break, since she herself had lost all her consistency. Of her own accord, but by our fault perhaps, for the tender words which we had addressed to Severity had perhaps, even without any deliberate calculation on her part, suggested to her that she ought to be gentle.

Distressing as the change may have been to us, it was not altogether maladroit, for our gratitude for all her gentleness would exact more from us perhaps than our delight at overcoming her cruelty. I do not say that a day will not come when, even to these luminous maidens, we shall not assign sharply differentiated characters, but that will be because they have ceased to interest us, because their entry upon the scene will no longer be to our heart the apparition which it expected in a different form and which leaves it overwhelmed every time by fresh incarnations. Their immobility will spring from our indifference to them, which will hand them over to the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

judgment of our mind. This will not, for that matter, be expressed in any more categorical terms, for after it has decided that some defect which was prominent in one is fortunately absent from the other, it will see that this defect had as its counterpart some priceless merit. So that the false judgment of our intellect, which comes into play only when we have ceased to take any interest, will define permanent characters of girls, which will enlighten us no more than the surprising faces that used to appear every day when, in the dizzy speed of our expectation, our friends presented themselves daily, weekly, too different to allow us, as they never halted in their passage, to classify them, to award degrees of merit. As for our sentiments, we have spoken of them too often to repeat again now that as often as not love is nothing more than the association of the face of a girl (whom otherwise we should soon have found intolerable) with the heartbeats inseparable from an endless, vain expectation, and from some trick that she has played upon us. All this is true not merely of imaginative young men brought into contact with changeable girls. At the stage that our narrative has now reached, it appears, as I have since heard, that Jupien's niece had altered her opinion of Morel and M. de Charlus. My motorist, reinforcing the love that she felt for Morel, had extolled to her, as existing in the violinist, boundless refinements of delicacy in which she was all too ready to believe. And at the same time Morel never ceased to complain to her of the despotic treatment that he received from M. de Charlus, which she ascribed to malevolence, never imagining that it could be due to love. She was moreover bound to acknowledge that M. de Charlus was tyrannically present at all their meetings.

THE CAPTIVE

In corroboration of all this, she had heard women in society speak of the Baron's terrible spite. Now, quite recently, her judgment had been completely reversed. She had discovered in Morel (without ceasing for that reason to love him) depths of malevolence and perfidy, compensated it was true by frequent kindness and genuine feeling; and in M. de Charlus an unimaginable and immense generosity blended with asperities of which she knew nothing. And so she had been unable to arrive at any more definite judgment of what, each in himself, the violinist and his protector really were, than I was able to form of Andrée, whom nevertheless I saw every day, or of Albertine who was living with me. On the evenings when the latter did not read aloud to me, she would play to me or begin a game of draughts, or a conversation, either of which I would interrupt with kisses. The simplicity of our relations made them soothing. The very emptiness of her life gave Albertine a sort of eagerness to comply with the only requests that I made of her. Behind this girl, as behind the purple light that used to filter beneath the curtains of my room at Balbec, while outside the concert blared, were shining the blue-green undulations of the sea. Was she not, after all (she in whose heart of hearts there was now regularly installed an idea of myself so familiar that, next to her aunt, I was perhaps the person whom she distinguished least from herself), the girl whom I had seen the first time at Balbec, in her flat polo-cap, with her insistent laughing eyes, a stranger still, exiguous as a silhouette projected against the waves? These effigies preserved intact in our memory, when we recapture them, we are astonished at their unlikeness to the person whom we know, and we

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

begin to realise what a task of remodelling is performed every day by habit. In the charm that Albertine had in Paris, by my fireside, there still survived the desire that had been aroused in me by that insolent and blossoming parade along the beach, and just as Rachel retained in Saint-Loup's eyes, even after he had made her abandon it, the prestige of her life on the stage, so in this Albertine cloistered in my house, far from Balbec, from which I had hurried her away, there persisted the emotion, the social confusion, the uneasy vanity, the roving desires of life by the seaside. She was so effectively caged that on certain evenings I did not even ask her to leave her room for mine, her to whom at one time all the world gave chase, whom I had found it so hard to overtake as she sped past on her bicycle, whom the liftboy himself was unable to capture for me, leaving me with scarcely a hope of her coming, although I sat up waiting for her all the night. Had not Albertine been—out there in front of the Hotel—like a great actress of the blazing beach, arousing jealousy when she advanced upon that natural stage, not speaking to anyone, thrusting past its regular frequenters, dominating the girls, her friends, and was not this so greatly coveted actress the same who, withdrawn by me from the stage, shut up in my house, was out of reach now of the desires of all the rest, who might hereafter seek for her in vain, sitting now in my room, now in her own, and engaged in tracing or cutting out some pattern?

No doubt, in the first days at Balbec, Albertine seemed to be on a parallel plane to that upon which I was living, but one that had drawn closer (after my visit to Elstir) and had finally become merged in it, as my relations with

THE CAPTIVE

her, at Balbec, in Paris, then at Balbec again, grew more intimate. Besides, between the two pictures of Balbec, at my first visit and at my second, pictures composed of the same villas from which the same girls walked down to the same sea, what a difference! In Albertine's friends at the time of my second visit, whom I knew so well, whose good and bad qualities were so clearly engraved on their features, how was I to recapture those fresh, mysterious strangers who at first could not, without making my heart throb, thrust open the door of their bungalow over the grinding sand and set the tamarisks shivering as they came down the path! Their huge eyes had, in the interval, been absorbed into their faces, doubtless because they had ceased to be children, but also because those ravishing strangers, those ravishing actresses of the romantic first year, as to whom I had gone ceaselessly in quest of information, no longer held any mystery for me. They had become obedient to my caprices, a mere grove of budding girls, from among whom I was quite distinctly proud of having plucked, and carried off from them all, their fairest rose.

Between the two Balbec scenes, so different one from the other, there was the interval of several years in Paris, the long expanse of which was dotted with all the visits that Albertine had paid me. I saw her in successive years of my life occupying, with regard to myself, different positions, which made me feel the beauty of the interposed gaps, that long extent of time in which I never set eyes on her and against the diaphanous background of which the rosy person that I saw before me was modelled with mysterious shadows and in bold relief. This was due also to the superimposition not merely of

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the successive images which Albertine had been for me, but also of the great qualities of brain and heart, the defects of character, all alike unsuspected by me, which Albertine, in a germination, a multiplication of herself, a carnal efflorescence in sombre colours, had added to a nature that formerly could scarcely have been said to exist, but was now deep beyond plumbing. For other people, even those of whom we have so often dreamed that they have become nothing more than a picture, a figure by Benozzo Gozzoli standing out upon a background of verdure, as to whom we were prepared to believe that the only variations depended upon the point of view from which we looked at them, their distance from us, the effect of light and shade, these people, while they change in relation to ourself, change also in themselves, and there had been an enrichment, a solidification and an increase of volume in the figure once so simply outlined against the sea. Moreover, it was not only the sea at the close of day that came to life for me in Albertine, but sometimes the drowsy murmur of the sea upon the shore on moonlit nights.

Sometimes, indeed, when I rose to fetch a book from my father's study, and had given my mistress permission to lie down while I was out of the room, she was so tired after her long outing in the morning and afternoon in the open air that, even if I had been away for a moment only, when I returned I found Albertine asleep and did not rouse her.

Stretched out at full length upon my bed, in an attitude so natural that no art could have designed it, she reminded me of a long blossoming stem that had been laid there, and so indeed she was: the faculty of dreaming

THE CAPTIVE

which I possessed only in her absence I recovered at such moments in her presence, as though by falling asleep she had become a plant. In this way her sleep did to a certain extent make love possible. When she was present, I spoke to her, but I was too far absent from myself to be able to think. When she was asleep, I no longer needed to talk to her, I knew that she was no longer looking at me, I had no longer any need to live upon my own outer surface.

By shutting her eyes, by losing consciousness, Albertine had stripped off, one after another, the different human characters with which she had deceived me ever since the day when I had first made her acquaintance. She was animated now only by the unconscious life of vegetation, of trees, a life more different from my own, more alien, and yet one that belonged more to me. Her personality did not escape at every moment, as when we were talking, by the channels of her unacknowledged thoughts and of her gaze. She had called back into herself everything of her that lay outside, had taken refuge, enclosed, reabsorbed, in her body. In keeping her before my eyes, in my hands, I had that impression of possessing her altogether, which I never had when she was awake. Her life was submitted to me, exhaled towards me its gentle breath.

I listened to this murmuring, mysterious emanation, soft as a breeze from the sea, fairylike as that moonlight which was her sleep. So long as it lasted, I was free to think about her and at the same time to look at her, and, when her sleep grew deeper, to touch, to kiss her. What I felt then was love in the presence of something as pure, as immaterial in its feelings, as mysterious, as if I had

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

been in the presence of those inanimate creatures which are the beauties of nature. And indeed, as soon as her sleep became at all heavy, she ceased to be merely the plant that she had been; her sleep, on the margin of which I remained musing, with a fresh delight of which I never tired, but could have gone on enjoying it indefinitely, was to me an undiscovered country. Her sleep brought within my reach something as calm, as sensually delicious as those nights of full moon on the bay of Balbec, turned quiet as a lake over which the branches barely stir, where stretched out upon the sand one could listen for hours on end to the waves breaking and receding.

When I entered the room, I remained standing in the doorway, not venturing to make a sound, and hearing none but that of her breath rising to expire upon her lips at regular intervals, like the reflux of the sea, but drowsier and more gentle. And at the moment when my ear absorbed that divine sound, I felt that there was, condensed in it, the whole person, the whole life of the charming captive, outstretched there before my eyes. Carriages went rattling past in the street, her features remained as motionless, as pure, her breath as light, reduced to the simplest expulsion of the necessary quantity of air. Then, seeing that her sleep would not be disturbed, I advanced cautiously, sat down upon the chair that stood by the bedside, then upon the bed itself.

I have spent charming evenings talking, playing games with Albertine, but never any so pleasant as when I was watching her sleep. Granted that she might have, as she chatted with me, or played cards, that spontaneity which no actress could have imitated, it was a spontaneity car-

THE CAPTIVE

ried to the second degree that was offered me by her sleep. Her hair, falling all along her rosy face, was spread out beside her on the bed, and here and there a separate straight tress gave the same effect of perspective as those moonlit trees, lank and pale, which one sees standing erect and stiff in the backgrounds of Elstir's raphaellesque pictures. If Albertine's lips were closed, her eyelids, on the other hand, seen from the point at which I was standing, seemed so loosely joined that I might almost have questioned whether she really was asleep. At the same time those drooping lids introduced into her face that perfect continuity, unbroken by any intrusion of eyes. There are people whose faces assume a quite unusual beauty and majesty the moment they cease to look out of their eyes.

I measured with my own Albertine outstretched at my feet. Now and then a slight, unaccountable tremor ran through her body, as the leaves of a tree are shaken for a few moments by a sudden breath of wind. She would touch her hair, then, not having arranged it to her liking, would raise her hand to it again with motions so consecutive, so deliberate, that I was convinced that she was about to wake. Not at all, she grew calm again in the sleep from which she had not emerged. After this she lay without moving. She had laid her hand on her bosom with a sinking of the arm so artlessly childlike that I was obliged, as I gazed at her, to suppress the smile that is provoked in us by the solemnity, the innocence and the charm of little children.

I, who was acquainted with many Albertines in one person, seemed now to see many more again, reposing by my side. Her eyebrows arched as I had never seen them

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

enclosed the globes of her eyelids like a halcyon's downy nest. Races, atavisms, vices reposed upon her face. Whenever she moved her head, she created a fresh woman, often one whose existence I had never suspected. I seemed to possess not one, but innumerable girls. Her breathing, as it became gradually deeper, was now regularly stirring her bosom and, through it, her folded hands, her pearls, displaced in a different way by the same movement, like the boats, the anchor chains that are set swaying by the movement of the tide. Then, feeling that the tide of her sleep was full, that I should not ground upon reefs of consciousness covered now by the high water of profound slumber, deliberately, I crept without a sound upon the bed, lay down by her side, clasped her waist in one arm, placed my lips upon her cheek and heart, then upon every part of her body in turn laid my free hand, which also was raised, like the pearls, by Albertine's breathing; I myself was gently rocked by its regular motion: I had embarked upon the tide of Albertine's sleep. Sometimes it made me taste a pleasure that was less pure. For this I had no need to make any movement, I allowed my leg to dangle against hers, like an oar which one allows to trail in the water, imparting to it now and again a gentle oscillation like the intermittent flap given to its wing by a bird asleep in the air. I chose, in gazing at her, this aspect of her face which no one ever saw and which was so pleasing.

It is I suppose comprehensible that the letters which we receive from a person are more or less similar and combine to trace an image of the writer so different from the person whom we know as to constitute a second personality. But how much stranger is it that a woman

THE CAPTIVE

should be conjoined, like Rosita and Doodica, with another woman whose different beauty makes us infer another character, and that in order to behold one we must look at her in profile, the other in full face. The sound of her breathing as it grew louder might give the illusion of the breathless ecstasy of pleasure and, when mine was at its climax, I could kiss her without having interrupted her sleep. I felt at such moments that I had been possessing her more completely, like an unconscious and unresisting object of dumb nature. I was not affected by the words that she muttered occasionally in her sleep, their meaning escaped me, and besides, whoever the unknown person to whom they referred, it was upon my hand, upon my cheek that her hand, as an occasional tremor recalled it to life, stiffened for an instant. I relished her sleep with a disinterested, soothing love, just as I would remain for hours listening to the unfurling of the waves.

Perhaps it is laid down that people must be capable of making us suffer intensely before, in the hours of respite, they can procure for us the same soothing calm as Nature. I had not to answer her as when we were engaged in conversation, and even if I could have remained silent, as for that matter I did when it was she that was talking, still while listening to her voice I did not penetrate so far into herself. As I continued to hear, to gather from moment to moment the murmur, soothing as a barely perceptible breeze, of her breath, it was a whole physiological existence that was spread out before me, for me; as I used to remain for hours lying on the beach, in the moonlight, so long could I have remained there gazing at her, listening to her.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Sometimes one would have said that the sea was becoming rough, that the storm was making itself felt even inside the bay, and like the bay I lay listening to the gathering roar of her breath. Sometimes, when she was too warm, she would take off, already half asleep, her kimono which she flung over my armchair. While she was asleep I would tell myself that all her correspondence was in the inner pocket of this kimono, into which she always thrust her letters. A signature, a written appointment would have sufficed to prove a lie or to dispel a suspicion. When I could see that Albertine was sound asleep, leaving the foot of the bed where I had been standing motionless in contemplation of her, I took a step forward, seized by a burning curiosity, feeling that the secret of this other life lay offering itself to me, flaccid and defenceless, in that armchair. Perhaps I took this step forward also because to stand perfectly still and watch her sleeping became tiring after a while. And so, on tiptoe, constantly turning round to make sure that Albertine was not waking, I made my way to the armchair. There I stopped short, stood for a long time gazing at the kimono, as I had stood for a long time gazing at Albertine. But (and here perhaps I was wrong) never once did I touch the kimono, put my hand in the pocket, examine the letters. In the end, realising that I would never make up my mind, I started back, on tiptoe, returned to Albertine's bedside and began again to watch her sleeping, her who would tell me nothing, whereas I could see lying across an arm of the chair that kimono which would have told me much. And just as people pay a hundred francs a day for a room at the Hotel at Balbec in order to breathe the sea air, I felt it to be quite

THE CAPTIVE

natural that I should spend more than that upon her since I had her breath upon my cheek, between her lips which I parted with my own, through which her life flowed against my tongue.

But this pleasure of seeing her sleep, which was as precious as that of feeling her live, was cut short by another pleasure, that of seeing her wake. It was, carried to a more profound and more mysterious degree, the same pleasure that I felt in having her under my roof. It was gratifying, of course, in the afternoon, when she alighted from the carriage, that it should be to my address that she was returning. It was even more so to me that when from the underworld of sleep she climbed the last steps of the stair of dreams, it was in my room that she was reborn to consciousness and life, that she asked herself for an instant: "Where am I?" and, seeing all the things in the room round about her, the lamp whose light scarcely made her blink her eyes, was able to assure herself that she was at home, as soon as she realised that she was waking in my home. In that first delicious moment of uncertainty, it seemed to me that once again I took a more complete possession of her since, whereas after an outing it was to her own room that she returned, it was now my room that, as soon as Albertine should have recognised it, was about to enclose, to contain her, without any sign of misgiving in the eyes of my mistress, which remained as calm as if she had never slept at all.

The uncertainty of awakening revealed by her silence was not at all revealed in her eyes. As soon as she was able to speak she said: "My ——" or "My dearest ——" followed by my Christian name, which if, we give the narrator the same name as the author of this book, would be "My Marcel," or "My dearest Marcel." After

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

this I would never allow my relatives, by calling me "dearest," to rob of their priceless uniqueness the delicious words that Albertine uttered to me. As she uttered them, she pursed her lips in a little pout which she herself transformed into a kiss. As quickly as, earlier in the evening, she had fallen asleep, so quickly had she awoken.

No more than my own progression in time, no more than the act of gazing at a girl seated opposite to me beneath the lamp, which shed upon her a different light from that of the sun when I used to behold her striding along the seashore, was this material enrichment, this autonomous progress of Albertine the determining cause of the difference between my present view of her and my original impression of her at Balbec. A longer term of years might have separated the two images without effecting so complete a change; it had come to pass, essential and sudden, when I learned that my mistress had been virtually brought up by Mlle. Vinteuil's friend. If at one time I had been carried away by excitement when I thought that I saw a trace of mystery in Albertine's eyes, now I was happy only at the moments when from those eyes, from her cheeks even, as mirroring as her eyes, so gentle now but quickly turning sullen, I succeeded in expelling every trace of mystery.

The image for which I sought, upon which I reposed, against which I would have liked to lean and die, was no longer that of Albertine leading a hidden life, it was that of an Albertine as familiar to me as possible (and for this reason my love could not be lasting unless it was unhappy, for in its nature it did not satisfy my need of mystery), an Albertine who did not reflect a distant

THE CAPTIVE

world, but desired nothing else—there were moments when this did indeed appear to be the case—than to be with me, a person like myself, an Albertine the embodiment of what belonged to me and not of the unknown. When it is in this way, from an hour of anguish caused by another person, when it is from uncertainty whether we shall be able to keep her or she will escape, that love is born, such love bears the mark of the revolution that has created it, it recalls very little of what we had previously seen when we thought of the person in question. And my first impressions at the sight of Albertine, against a background of sea, might to some small extent persist in my love of her: actually, these earlier impressions occupy but a tiny place in a love of this sort; in its strength, in its agony, in its need of comfort and its return to a calm and soothing memory with which we would prefer to abide and to learn nothing more of her whom we love, even if there be something horrible that we ought to know—would prefer still more to consult only these earlier memories—such a love is composed of very different material!

Sometimes I put out the light before she came in. It was in the darkness, barely guided by the glow of a smouldering log, that she lay down by my side. My hands, my cheeks alone identified her without my eyes' beholding her, my eyes that often were afraid of finding her altered. With the result that by virtue of this unseeing love she may have felt herself bathed in a warmer affection than usual. On other evenings, I undressed, I lay down, and, with Albertine perched on the side of my bed, we resumed our game or our conversation interrupted by kisses; and, in the desire that alone makes us

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

take an interest in the existence and character of another person, we remain so true to our own nature (even if, at the same time, we abandon successively the different people whom we have loved in turn), that on one occasion, catching sight of myself in the glass at the moment when I was kissing Albertine and calling her my little girl, the sorrowful, passionate expression on my own face, similar to the expression it had assumed long ago with Gilberte whom I no longer remembered, and would perhaps assume one day with another girl, if I was fated ever to forget Albertine, made me think that over and above any personal considerations (instinct requiring that we consider the person of the moment as the only true person) I was performing the duties of an ardent and painful devotion dedicated as an oblation to the youth and beauty of Woman. And yet with this desire, honouring youth with an *ex voto*, with my memories also of Balbec, there was blended, in the need that I felt of keeping Albertine in this way every evening by my side, something that had hitherto been unknown, at least in my amorous existence, if it was not entirely novel in my life.

It was a soothing power the like of which I had not known since the evenings at Combray long ago when my mother, stooping over my bed, brought me repose in a kiss. To be sure, I should have been greatly astonished at that time, had anyone told me that I was not wholly virtuous, and more astonished still to be told that I would ever seek to deprive some one else of a pleasure. I must have known myself very slightly, for my pleasure in having Albertine to live with me was much less a positive pleasure than that of having withdrawn from the world, where everyone was free to enjoy her in turn, the

THE CAPTIVE

blossoming damsel who, if she did not bring me any great joy, was at least withholding joy from others. Ambition, fame would have left me unmoved. Even more was I incapable of feeling hatred. And yet to me to love in a carnal sense was at any rate to enjoy a triumph over countless rivals. I can never repeat it often enough; it was first and foremost a sedative.

For all that I might, before Albertine returned, have doubted her loyalty, have imagined her in the room at Montjouvain, once she was in her dressing-gown and seated facing my chair, or (if, as was more frequent, I had remained in bed) at the foot of my bed, I would deposit my doubts in her, hand them over for her to relieve me of them, with the abnegation of a worshipper uttering his prayer. All the evening she might have been there, huddled in a provoking ball upon my bed, playing with me, like a great cat; her little pink nose, the tip of which she made even tinier with a coquettish glance which gave it that sharpness which we see in certain people who are inclined to be stout, might have given her a fiery and rebellious air; she might have allowed a tress of her long, dark hair to fall over a cheek of rosy wax and, half shutting her eyes, unfolding her arms, have seemed to be saying to me: "Do with me what you please!"; when, as the time came for her to leave me, she drew nearer to say goodnight, it was a meekness that had become almost a part of my family life that I kissed on either side of her firm throat which now never seemed to me brown or freckled enough, as though these solid qualities had been in keeping with some loyal generosity in Albertine.

When it was Albertine's turn to bid me good-night, kissing me on either side of my throat, her hair caressed

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

me like a wing of softly bristling feathers. Incomparable as were those two kisses of peace, Albertine slipped into my mouth, making me the gift of her tongue, like a gift of the Holy Spirit, conveyed to me a viaticum, left me with a provision of tranquillity almost as precious as when my mother in the evening at Combray used to lay her lips upon my brow.

"Are you coming with us to-morrow, you naughty man?" she asked before leaving me. "Where are you going?" "That will depend on the weather and on yourself. But have you written anything to-day, my little darling? No? Then it was hardly worth your while, not coming with us. Tell me, by the way, when I came in, you knew my step, you guessed at once who it was?" "Of course. Could I possibly be mistaken, couldn't I tell my little sparrow's hop among a thousand? She must let me take her shoes off, before she goes to bed, it will be such a pleasure to me. You are so nice and pink in all that white lace."

Such was my answer; among the sensual expressions, we may recognise others that were peculiar to my grandmother and mother for, little by little, I was beginning to resemble all my relatives, my father who—in a very different fashion from myself, no doubt, for if things do repeat themselves, it is with great variations—took so keen an interest in the weather; and not my father only, I was becoming more and more like my aunt Léonie. Otherwise, Albertine could not but have been a reason for my going out of doors, so as not to leave her by herself, beyond my control. My aunt Léonie, wrapped up in her religious observances, with whom I could have sworn that I had not a single point in common, I so passionately

THE CAPTIVE

keen on pleasure, apparently worlds apart from that maniac who had never known any pleasure in her life and lay mumbling her rosary all day long, I who suffered from my inability to embark upon a literary career whereas she had been the one person in the family who could never understand that reading was anything more than an amusing pastime, which made reading, even at the paschal season, lawful upon Sunday, when every serious occupation is forbidden, in order that the day may be hallowed by prayer alone. Now, albeit every day I found an excuse in some particular indisposition which made me so often remain in bed, a person (not Albertine, not any person that I loved, but a person with more power over me than any beloved) had migrated into me, despotic to the extent of silencing at times my jealous suspicions or at least of preventing me from going to find out whether they had any foundation, and this was my aunt Léonie. It was quite enough that I should bear an exaggerated resemblance to my father, to the extent of not being satisfied like him with consulting the barometer, but becoming an animated barometer myself; it was quite enough that I should allow myself to be ordered by my aunt Léonie to stay at home and watch the weather, from my bedroom window or even from my bed; yet here I was talking now to Albertine, at one moment as the child that I had been at Combray used to talk to my mother, at another as my grandmother used to talk to me.

When we have passed a certain age, the soul of the child that we were and the souls of the dead from whom we spring come and bestow upon us in handfuls their treasures and their calamities, asking to be allowed to cooper-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

ate in the new sentiments which we are feeling and in which, obliterating their former image, we recast them in an original creation. Thus my whole past from my earliest years, and earlier still the past of my parents and relatives, blended with my impure love for Albertine the charm of an affection at once filial and maternal. We have to give hospitality, at a certain stage in our life, to all our relatives who have journeyed so far and gathered round us.

Before Albertine obeyed and allowed me to take off her shoes, I opened her chemise. Her two little upstanding breasts were so round that they seemed not so much to be an integral part of her body as to have ripened there like fruit; and her belly (concealing the place where a man's is marred as though by an iron clamp left sticking in a statue that has been taken down from its niche) was closed, at the junction of her thighs, by two valves of a curve as hushed, as reposeful, as cloistral as that of the horizon after the sun has set. She took off her shoes, and lay down by my side.

O mighty attitudes of Man and Woman, in which there seeks to be reunited, in the innocence of the world's first age and with the humility of clay, what creation has cloven apart, in which Eve is astonished and submissive before the Man by whose side she has awoken, as he himself, alone still, before God Who has fashioned him. Albertine folded her arms behind her dark hair, her swelling hip, her leg falling with the inflexion of a swan's neck that stretches upwards and then curves over towards its starting point. It was only when she was lying right on her side that one saw a certain aspect of her face (so good and handsome when one looked at it from in front) which

THE CAPTIVE

I could not endure, hook-nosed as in some of Leonardo's caricatures, seeming to indicate the shiftiness, the greed for profit, the cunning of a spy whose presence in my house would have filled me with horror and whom that profile seemed to unmask. At once I took Albertine's face in my hands and altered its position.

"Be a good boy, promise me that if you don't come out to-morrow you will work," said my mistress as she slipped into her chemise. "Yes, but don't put on your dressing-gown yet." Sometimes I ended by falling asleep by her side. The room had grown cold, more wood was wanted. I tried to find the bell above my head, but failed to do so, after fingering all the copper rods in turn save those between which it hung, and said to Albertine who had sprung from the bed so that Françoise should not find us lying side by side: "No, come back for a moment, I can't find the bell."

Comforting moments, gay, innocent to all appearance, and yet moments in which there accumulates in us the never suspected possibility of disaster, which makes the amorous life the most precarious of all, that in which the incalculable rain of sulphur and brimstone falls after the most radiant moments, after which, without having the courage to derive its lesson from our mishap, we set to work immediately to rebuild upon the slopes of the crater from which nothing but catastrophe can emerge. I was as careless as everyone who imagines that his happiness will endure.

It is precisely because this comfort has been necessary to bring grief to birth—and will return moreover at intervals to calm it—that men can be sincere with each other, and even with themselves, when they pride themselves upon a woman's kindness to them, although, taking things

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

all in all, at the heart of their intimacy there lurks continually in a secret fashion, unavowed to the rest of the world, or revealed unintentionally by questions, inquiries, a painful uncertainty. But as this could not have come to birth without the preliminary comfort, as even afterwards the intermittent comfort is necessary to make suffering endurable and to prevent ruptures, their concealment of the secret hell that life can be when shared with the woman in question, carried to the pitch of an ostentatious display of an intimacy which, they pretend, is precious, expresses a genuine point of view, a universal process of cause and effect, one of the modes in which the production of grief is rendered possible.

It no longer surprised me that Albertine should be in the house, and would not be going out to-morrow save with myself or in the custody of Andrée. These habits of a life shared in common, this broad outline which defined my existence and within which nobody might penetrate but Albertine, also (in the future plan, of which I was still unaware, of my life to come, like the plan traced by an architect for monumental structures which will not be erected until long afterwards) the remoter lines, parallel to the others but vaster, that sketched in me, like a lonely hermitage, the somewhat rigid and monotonous formula of my future loves, had in reality been traced that night at Balbec when, in the little tram, after Albertine had revealed to me who it was that had brought her up, I had decided at any cost to remove her from certain influences and to prevent her from straying out of my sight for some days to come. Day after day had gone by, these habits had become mechanical, but, like those primitive rites the meaning of which historians seek to discover,

THE CAPTIVE

I might (but would not) have said to anybody who asked me what I meant by this life of seclusion which I carried so far as not to go any more to the theatre, that its origin was the anxiety of a certain evening, and my need to prove to myself, during the days that followed, that the girl whose unfortunate childhood I had learned should not find it possible, if she wished, to expose herself to similar temptations. I no longer thought, save very rarely, of these possibilities, but they were nevertheless to remain vaguely present in my consciousness. The fact that I was destroying—or trying to destroy—them day by day was doubtless the reason why it comforted me to kiss those cheeks which were no more beautiful than many others; beneath any carnal attraction which is at all profound, there is the permanent possibility of danger.

I had promised Albertine that, if I did not go out with her, I would settle down to work, but in the morning, just as if, taking advantage of our being asleep, the house had miraculously flown, I awoke in different weather beneath another clime. We do not begin to work at the moment of landing in a strange country to the conditions of which we have to adapt ourself. But each day was for me a different country. Even my laziness itself, beneath the novel forms that it had assumed, how was I to recognise it?

Sometimes, on days when the weather was, according to everyone, past praying for, the mere act of staying in the house, situated in the midst of a steady and continuous rain, had all the gliding charm, the soothing silence, the interest of a sea voyage; at another time, on a bright day, to lie still in bed was to let the lights and shadows play around me as round a tree-trunk.

Or yet again, in the first strokes of the bell of a neighbouring convent, rare as the early morning worshippers, barely whitening the dark sky with their fluttering snow-fall, melted and scattered by the warm breeze, I had discerned one of those tempestuous, disordered, delightful days, when the roofs soaked by an occasional shower and dried by a breath of wind or a ray of sunshine let fall a cooing eavesdrop, and, as they wait for the wind to resume its turn, preen in the momentary sunlight that has burnished them their pigeon's-breast of slates, one of those days filled with so many changes of weather, atmospheric incidents, storms, that the idle man does

THE CAPTIVE

not feel that he has wasted them, because he has been taking an interest in the activity which, in default of himself, the atmosphere, acting in a sense in his stead, has displayed; days similar to those times of revolution or war which do not seem empty to the schoolboy who has played truant from his classroom, because by loitering outside the Law Courts or by reading the newspapers, he has the illusion of finding, in the events that have occurred, failing the lesson which he has not learned, an intellectual profit and an excuse for his idleness; days to which we may compare those on which there occurs in our life some exceptional crisis from which the man who has never done anything imagines that he is going to acquire, if it comes to a happy issue, laborious habits; for instance, the morning on which he sets out for a duel which is to be fought under particularly dangerous conditions; then he is suddenly made aware, at the moment when it is perhaps about to be taken from him, of the value of a life of which he might have made use to begin some important work, or merely to enjoy pleasures, and of which he has failed to make any use at all. "If I can only not be killed," he says to himself, "how I shall settle down to work this very minute, and how I shall enjoy myself too."

Life has in fact suddenly acquired, in his eyes, a higher value, because he puts into life everything that it seems to him capable of giving, instead of the little that he normally makes it give. He sees it in the light of his desire, not as his experience has taught him that he was apt to make it, that is to say so tawdry! It has, at that moment, become filled with work, travel, mountain-climbing, all the pleasant things which, he tells himself, the fatal

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

issue of the duel may render impossible, whereas they were already impossible before there was any question of a duel, owing to the bad habits which, even had there been no duel, would have persisted. He returns home without even a scratch, but he continues to find the same obstacles to pleasures, excursions, travel, to everything of which he had feared for a moment to be for ever deprived by death; to deprive him of them life has been sufficient. As for work—exceptional circumstances having the effect of intensifying what previously existed in the man, labour in the laborious, laziness in the lazy—he takes a holiday.

I followed his example, and did as I had always done since my first resolution to become a writer, which I had made long ago, but which seemed to me to date from yesterday, because I had regarded each intervening day as non-existent. I treated this day in a similar fashion, allowing its showers of rain and bursts of sunshine to pass without doing anything, and vowing that I would begin to work on the morrow. But then I was no longer the same man beneath a cloudless sky; the golden note of the bells did not contain merely (as honey contains) light, but the sensation of light and also the sickly savour of preserved fruits (because at Combray it had often loitered like a wasp over our cleared dinner-table). On this day of dazzling sunshine, to remain until nightfall with my eyes shut was a thing permitted, customary, healthgiving, pleasant, seasonable, like keeping the outside shutters closed against the heat.

It was in such weather as this that at the beginning of my second visit to Balbec I used to hear the violins of the orchestra amid the bluish flow of the rising tide. How much more fully did I possess Albertine to-day.

THE CAPTIVE

There were days when the sound of a bell striking the hour bore upon the sphere of its resonance a plate so cool, so richly loaded with moisture or with light that it was like a transcription for the blind, or if you prefer a musical interpretation of the charm of rain or of the charm of the sun. So much so that, at that moment, as I lay in bed, with my eyes shut, I said to myself that everything is capable of transposition and that a universe which was merely audible might be as full of variety as the other. Travelling lazily upstream from day to day, as in a boat, and seeing appear before my eyes an endlessly changing succession of enchanted memories, which I did not select, which a moment earlier had been invisible, and which my mind presented to me one after another, without my being free to choose them, I pursued idly over that continuous expanse my stroll in the sunshine.

Those morning concerts at Balbec were not remote in time. And yet, at that comparatively recent moment, I had given but little thought to Albertine. Indeed, on the very first mornings after my arrival, I had not known that she was at Balbec. From whom then had I learned it? Oh, yes, from Aimé. It was a fine sunny day like this. He was glad to see me again. But he does not like Albertine. Not everybody can be in love with her. Yes, it was he who told me that she was at Balbec. But how did he know? Ah! he had met her, had thought that she had a bad style. At that moment, as I regarded Aimé's story from another aspect than that in which he had told me it, my thoughts, which hitherto had been sailing blissfully over these untroubled waters, exploded suddenly, as though they had struck an invisible and

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

perilous mine, treacherously moored at this point in my memory. He had told me that he had met her, that he had thought her style bad. What had he meant by a bad style? I had understood him to mean a vulgar manner, because, to contradict him in advance, I had declared that she was most refined. But no, perhaps he had meant the style of Gomorrah. She was with another girl, perhaps their arms were round one another's waist, they were staring at other women, they were indeed displaying a "style" which I had never seen Albertine adopt in my presence. Who was the other girl, where had Aimé met her, this odious Albertine?

I tried to recall exactly what Aimé had said to me, in order to see whether it could be made to refer to what I imagined, or he had meant nothing more than common manners. But in vain might I ask the question, the person who put it and the person who might supply the recollection were, alas, one and the same person, myself, who was momentarily duplicated but without adding anything to my stature. Question as I might, it was myself who answered, I learned nothing fresh. I no longer gave a thought to Mlle. Vinteuil. Born of a novel suspicion, the fit of jealousy from which I was suffering was novel also, or rather it was only the prolongation, the extension of that suspicion, it had the same theatre, which was no longer Montjouvain, but the road upon which Aimé had met Albertine, and for its object the various friends one or other of whom might be she who had been with Albertine that day. It was perhaps a certain Élisabeth, or else perhaps those two girls whom Albertine had watched in the mirror at the Casino, while appearing not to notice them. She had doubtless been having relations with

THE CAPTIVE

them, and also with Esther, Bloch's cousin. Such relations, had they been revealed to me by a third person, would have been enough almost to kill me, but as it was myself that was imagining them, I took care to add sufficient uncertainty to deaden the pain.

We succeed in absorbing daily, under the guise of suspicions, in enormous doses, this same idea that we are being betrayed, a quite minute quantity of which might prove fatal, if injected by the needle of a stabbing word. It is no doubt for that reason, and by a survival of the instinct of self-preservation, that the same jealous man does not hesitate to form the most terrible suspicions upon a basis of innocuous details, provided that, whenever any proof is brought to him, he may decline to accept its evidence. Anyhow, love is an incurable malady, like those diathetic states in which rheumatism affords the sufferer a brief respite only to be replaced by epileptiform headaches. Was my jealous suspicion calmed, I then felt a grudge against Albertine for not having been gentle with me, perhaps for having made fun of me to Andrée. I thought with alarm of the idea that she must have formed if Andrée had repeated all our conversations; the future loomed black and menacing. This mood of depression left me only if a fresh jealous suspicion drove me upon another quest or if, on the other hand, Albertine's display of affection made the actual state of my fortunes seem to me immaterial. Whoever this girl might be, I should have to write to Aimé, to try to see him, and then I should check his statement by talking to Albertine, hearing her confession. In the mean time, convinced that it must be Bloch's cousin, I asked Bloch himself, who had not the remotest idea of my purpose, simply to let me see

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

her photograph, or, better still, to arrange if possible for me to meet her.

How many persons, cities, roads does not jealousy make us eager thus to know? It is a thirst for knowledge thanks to which, with regard to various isolated points, we end by acquiring every possible notion in turn except those that we require. We can never tell whether a suspicion will not arise, for, all of a sudden, we recall a sentence that was not clear, an alibi that cannot have been given us without a purpose. And yet, we have not seen the person again, but there is such a thing as a post-humous jealousy, that is born only after we have left her, a jealousy of the doorstep. Perhaps the habit that I had formed of nursing in my bosom several simultaneous desires, a desire for a young girl of good family such as I used to see pass beneath my window escorted by her governess, and especially of the girl whom Saint Loup had mentioned to me, the one who frequented houses of ill fame, a desire for handsome lady's-maids, and especially for the maid of Mme. Putbus, a desire to go to the country in early spring, to see once again hawthorns, apple trees in blossom, storms at sea, a desire for Venice, a desire to settle down to work, a desire to live like other people—perhaps the habit of storing up, without assuaging any of them, all these desires, contenting myself with the promise, made to myself, that I would not forget to satisfy them one day, perhaps this habit, so many years old already, of perpetual postponement, of what M. de Charlus used to castigate under the name of procrastination, had become so prevalent in me that it assumed control of my jealous suspicions also and, while it made me take a mental note that I would not fail, some day, to

THE CAPTIVE

have an explanation from Albertine with regard to the girl, possibly the girls (this part of the story was confused, rubbed out, that is to say obliterated, in my memory) with whom Aimé had met her, made me also postpone this explanation. In any case, I would not mention it this evening to my mistress for fear of making her think me jealous and so offending her.

And yet when, on the following day, Bloch had sent me the photograph of his cousin Esther, I made haste to forward it to Aimé. And at the same moment I remembered that Albertine had that morning refused me a pleasure which might indeed have tired her. Was that in order to reserve it for some one else? This afternoon, perhaps? For whom?

Thus it is that jealousy is endless, for even if the beloved object, by dying for instance, can no longer provoke it by her actions, it so happens that posthumous memories, of later origin than any event, take shape suddenly in our minds as though they were events also, memories which hitherto we have never properly explored, which had seemed to us unimportant, and to which our own meditation upon them has been sufficient, without any external action, to give a new and terrible meaning. We have no need of her company, it is enough to be alone in our room, thinking, for fresh betrayals of us by our mistress to come to light, even though she be dead. And so we ought not to fear in love, as in everyday life, the future alone, but even the past which often we do not succeed in realising until the future has come and gone; and we are not speaking only of the past which we discover long afterwards, but of the past which we have long kept stored up in ourself and learn suddenly how to interpret.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

No matter, I was very glad, now that afternoon was turning to evening, that the hour was not far off when I should be able to appeal to Albertine's company for the consolation of which I stood in need. Unfortunately, the evening that followed was one of those on which this consolation was not afforded me, on which the kiss that Albertine would give me when she left me for the night, very different from her ordinary kiss, would no more soothe me than my mother's kiss had soothed me long ago, on days when she was vexed with me and I dared not send for her, but at the same time knew that I should not be able to sleep. Such evenings were now those on which Albertine had formed for the morrow some plan of which she did not wish me to know. Had she confided in me, I would have employed, to assure its successful execution, an ardour which none but Albertine could have inspired in me. But she told me nothing, nor had she any need to tell me anything; as soon as she came in, before she had even crossed the threshold of my room, as she was still wearing her hat or toque, I had already detected the unknown, restive, desperate, indomitable desire. Now, these were often the evenings when I had awaited her return with the most loving thoughts, and looked forward to throwing my arms round her neck with the warmest affection.

Alas, those misunderstandings that I had often had with my parents, whom I found cold or cross at the moment when I was running to embrace them, overflowing with love, are nothing in comparison with these that occur between lovers! The anguish then is far less superficial, far harder to endure, it has its abode in a deeper stratum of the heart.

THE CAPTIVE

This evening, however, Albertine was obliged to mention the plan that she had in her mind; I gathered at once that she wished to go next day to pay a call on Mme. Verdurin, a call to which in itself I would have had no objection. But evidently her object was to meet some one there, to prepare some future pleasure. Otherwise she would not have attached so much importance to this call. That is to say, she would not have kept on assuring me that it was of no importance. I had in the course of my life developed in the opposite direction to those races which make use of phonetic writing only after regarding the letters of the alphabet as a set of symbols; I, who for so many years had sought for the real life and thought of other people only in the direct statements with which they furnished me of their own free will, failing these had come to attach importance, on the contrary, only to the evidence that is not a rational and analytical expression of the truth; the words themselves did not enlighten me unless they could be interpreted in the same way as a sudden rush of blood to the cheeks of a person who is embarrassed, or, what is even more telling, a sudden silence.

Some subsidiary word (such as that used by M. de Cambremer when he understood that I was "literary," and, not having spoken to me before, as he was describing a visit that he had paid to the Verdurins, turned to me with: "*Why*, Borelli was there!") bursting into flames at the unintended, sometimes perilous contact of two ideas which the speaker has not expressed, but which, by applying the appropriate methods of analysis or electrolysis I was able to extract from it, told me more than a long speech.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Albertine sometimes allowed to appear in her conversation one or other of these precious amalgams which I made haste to "treat" so as to transform them into lucid ideas. It is by the way one of the most terrible calamities for the lover that if particular details—which only experiment, espionage, of all the possible realisations, would ever make him know—are so difficult to discover, the truth on the other hand is so easy to penetrate or merely to feel by instinct.

Often I had seen her, at Balbec, fasten upon some girls who came past us a sharp and lingering stare, like a physical contact, after which, if I knew the girls, she would say to me: "Suppose we asked them to join us? I should so love to be rude to them." And now, for some time past, doubtless since she had succeeded in reading my character, no request to me to invite anyone, not a word, never even a sidelong glance from her eyes, which had become objectless and mute, and as revealing, with the vague and vacant expression of the rest of her face, as had been their magnetic swerve before. Now it was impossible for me to reproach her, or to ply her with questions about things which she would have declared to be so petty, so trivial, things that I had stored up in my mind simply for the pleasure of making mountains out of molehills. It is hard enough to say: "Why did you stare at that girl who went past?" but a great deal harder to say: "Why did you not stare at her?" And yet I knew quite well, or at least I should have known, if I had not chosen to believe Albertine's assertions rather than all the trivialities contained in a glance, proved by it and by some contradiction or other in her speech, a contradiction which often I did not perceive until long after I had

THE CAPTIVE

left her, which kept me on tenterhooks all the night long, which I never dared mention to her again, but which nevertheless continued to honour my memory from time to time with its periodical visits.

Often, in the case of these furtive or sidelong glances on the beach at Balbec or in the streets of Paris, I might ask myself whether the person who provoked them was not merely at the moment when she passed an object of desire but was an old acquaintance, or else some girl who had simply been mentioned to her, and of whom, when I heard about it, I was astonished that anybody could have spoken to her, so utterly unlike was she to anyone that Albertine could possibly wish to know. But the Gomorrah of to-day is a dissected puzzle made up of fragments which are picked up in the places where we least expected to find them. Thus I once saw at Rivebelle a big dinner-party of ten women, all of whom I happened to know—at least by name—women as unlike one another as possible, perfectly united nevertheless, so much so that I never saw a party so homogeneous, albeit so composite.

To return to the girls whom we passed in the street, never did Albertine gaze at an old person, man or woman, with such fixity, or on the other hand with such reserve, and as though she saw nothing. The cuckolded husbands who know nothing know everything all the same. But it requires more accurate and abundant evidence to create a scene of jealousy. Besides, if jealousy helps us to discover a certain tendency to falsehood in the woman whom we love, it multiplies this tendency an hundredfold when the woman has discovered that we are jealous. She lies (to an extent to which she has never lied to us before), whether from pity, or from fear, or

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

because she instinctively withdraws by a methodical flight from our investigations. Certainly there are love affairs in which from the start a light woman has posed as virtue incarnate in the eyes of the man who is in love with her. But how many others consist of two diametrically opposite periods? In the first, the woman speaks almost spontaneously, with slight modifications, of her zest for sensual pleasure, of the gay life which it has made her lead, things all of which she will deny later on, with the last breath in her body, to the same man—when she has felt that he is jealous of and spying upon her. He begins to think with regret of the days of those first confidences, the memory of which torments him nevertheless. If the woman continued to make them, she would furnish him almost unaided with the secret of her conduct which he has been vainly pursuing day after day. And besides, what a surrender that would mean, what trust, what friendship. If she cannot live without betraying him, at least she would be betraying him as a friend, telling him of her pleasures, associating him with them. And he thinks with regret of the sort of life which the early stages of their love seemed to promise, which the sequel has rendered impossible, making of that love a thing exquisitely painful, which will render a final parting, according to circumstances, either inevitable or impossible.

Sometimes the script from which I deciphered Albertine's falsehoods, without being ideographic needed simply to be read backwards; so this evening she had flung at me in a careless tone the message, intended to pass almost unheeded: "It is possible that I may go tomorrow to the Verdurins", I don't in the least know

THE CAPTIVE

whether I shall go, I don't really want to." A childish anagram of the admission: "I shall go to-morrow to the Verdurins', it is absolutely certain, for I attach the utmost importance to the visit." This apparent hesitation indicated a resolute decision and was intended to diminish the importance of the visit while warning me of it. Albertine always adopted a tone of uncertainty in speaking of her irrevocable decisions. Mine was no less irrevocable. I took steps to arrange that this visit to Mme. Verdurin should not take place. Jealousy is often only an uneasy need to be tyrannical, applied to matters of love. I had doubtless inherited from my father this abrupt, arbitrary desire to threaten the people whom I loved best in the hopes with which they were lulling themselves with a security that I determined to expose to them as false; when I saw that Albertine had planned without my knowledge, behind my back, an expedition which I would have done everything in the world to make easier and more pleasant for her, had she taken me into her confidence, I said carelessly, so as to make her tremble, that I intended to go out the next day myself.

I set to work to suggest to Albertine other expeditions in directions which would have made this visit to the Verdurins impossible, in words stamped with a feigned indifference beneath which I strove to conceal my excitement. But she had detected it. It encountered in her the electric shock of a contrary will which violently repulsed it; I could see the sparks flash from her eyes. Of what use, though, was it to pay attention to what her eyes were saying at that moment? How had I failed to observe long ago that Albertine's eyes belonged to the class which even in a quite ordinary person seem to be

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

composed of a number of fragments, because of all the places which the person wishes to visit—and to conceal her desire to visit—that day. Those eyes which their falsehood keeps ever immobile and passive, but dynamic, measurable in the yards or miles to be traversed before they reach the determined, the implacably determined meeting-place, eyes that are not so much smiling at the pleasure which tempts them as they are shadowed with melancholy and discouragement because there may be a difficulty in their getting to the meeting-place. Even when you hold them in your hands, these people are fugitives. To understand the emotions which they arouse, and which other people, even better looking, do not arouse, we must take into account that they are not immobile but in motion, and add to their person a sign corresponding to what in physics is the sign that indicates velocity. If you upset their plans for the day, they confess to you the pleasure that they had hidden from you: "I did so want to go to tea at five o'clock with so and so, my dearest friend." Very well, if, six months later, you come to know the person in question, you will learn that the girl whose plans you upset, who, caught in the trap, in order that you might set her free, confessed to you that she was in the habit of taking tea like this with a dear friend, every day at the hour at which you did not see her,—has never once been inside this person's house, that they have never taken tea together, and that the girl used to explain that her whole time was taken up by none other than yourself. And so the person with whom she confessed that she had gone to tea, with whom she begged you to allow her to go to tea, that person, the excuse that necessity made her plead, was not the real

THE CAPTIVE

person, there was somebody, something else! Something else, what? Some one, who?

Alas, the kaleidoscopic eyes starting off into the distance and shadowed with melancholy might enable us perhaps to measure distance, but do not indicate direction. The boundless field of possibilities extends before us, and if by any chance the reality presented itself to our gaze, it would be so far beyond the bounds of possibility that, dashing suddenly against the boundary wall, we should fall over backwards. It is not even essential that we should have proof of her movement and flight, it is enough that we should guess them. She had promised us a letter, we were calm, we were no longer in love. The letter has not come; no messenger appears with it; what can have happened? anxiety is born afresh, and love. It is such people more than any others who inspire love in us, for our destruction. For every fresh anxiety that we feel on their account strips them in our eyes of some of their personality. We were resigned to suffering, thinking that we loved outside ourself, and we perceive that our love is a function of our sorrow, that our love perhaps is our sorrow, and that its object is, to a very small extent only, the girl with the raven tresses. But, when all is said, it is these people more than any others who inspire love.

Generally speaking, love has not as its object a human body, except when an emotion, the fear of losing it, the uncertainty of finding it again have been infused into it. This sort of anxiety has a great affinity for bodies. It adds to them a quality which surpasses beauty even; which is one of the reasons why we see men who are indifferent to the most beautiful women fall passionately

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

in love with others who appear to us ugly. To these people, these fugitives, their own nature, our anxiety fastens wings. And even when they are in our company the look in their eyes seems to warn us that they are about to take flight. The proof of this beauty, surpassing the beauty added by the wings, is that very often the same person is, in our eyes, alternately wingless and winged. Afraid of losing her, we forget all the others. Sure of keeping her, we compare her with those others whom at once we prefer to her. And as these emotions and these certainties may vary from week to week, a person may one week see sacrificed to her everything that gave us pleasure, in the following week be sacrificed herself, and so for weeks and months on end. All of which would be incomprehensible did we not know from the experience, which every man shares, of having at least once in a lifetime ceased to love, forgotten a woman, for how very little a person counts in herself when she is no longer—or is not yet—permeable by our emotions. And, be it understood, what we say of fugitives is equally true of those in prison, the captive women, we suppose that we are never to possess them. And so men detest procuresses, for these facilitate the flight, enhance the temptation, but if on the other hand they are in love with a cloistered woman, they willingly have recourse to a procuress to make her emerge from her prison and bring her to them. In so far as relations with women whom we abduct are less permanent than others, the reason is that the fear of not succeeding in procuring them or the dread of seeing them escape is the whole of our love for them and that once they have been carried off from their husbands, torn from their footlights, cured of the tempta-

THE CAPTIVE

tion to leave us, dissociated in short from our emotion whatever it may be, they are only themselves, that is to say almost nothing, and, so long desired, are soon forsaken by the very man who was so afraid of their forsaking him.

How, I have asked, did I not guess this? But had I not guessed it from the first day at Balbec? Had I not detected in Albertine one of those girls beneath whose envelope of flesh more hidden persons are stirring, than in . . . I do not say a pack of cards still in its box, a cathedral or a theatre before we enter it, but the whole, vast, ever changing crowd? Not only all these persons, but the desire, the voluptuous memory, the desperate quest of all these persons. At Balbec I had not been troubled because I had never even supposed that one day I should be following a trail, even a false trail. No matter! This had given Albertine, in my eyes, the plenitude of a person filled to the brim by the superimposition of all these persons, and desires and voluptuous memories of persons. And now that she had one day let fall the words "Mlle. Vinteuil," I would have wished not to tear off her garments so as to see her body but through her body to see and read that memorandum block of her memories and her future, passionate engagements.

How suddenly do the things that are probably the most insignificant assume an extraordinary value when a person whom we love (or who has lacked only this duplicity to make us love her) conceals them from us! In itself, suffering does not of necessity inspire in us sentiments of love or hatred towards the person who causes it: a surgeon can hurt our body without arousing any personal emotion. But a woman who has continued for some time

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

to assure us that we are everything in the world to her, without being herself everything in the world to us, a woman whom we enjoy seeing, kissing, taking upon our knee, we are astonished if we merely feel from a sudden resistance that we are not free to dispose of her life. Disappointment may then revive in us the forgotten memory of an old anguish, which we know, all the same, to have been provoked not by this woman but by others whose betrayals are milestones in our past life; if it comes to that, how have we the courage to wish to live, how can we move a finger to preserve ourself from death, in a world in which love is provoked only by falsehood, and consists merely in our need to see our sufferings appeased by the person who has made us suffer? To restore us from the collapse which follows our discovery of her falsehood and her resistance, there is the drastic remedy of endeavouring to act against her will, with the help of people whom we feel to be more closely involved than we are in her life, upon her who is resisting us and lying to us, to play the cheat in turn, to make ourself loathed. But the suffering caused by such a love is of the sort which must inevitably lead the sufferer to seek in a change of posture an illusory comfort.

These means of action are not wanting, alas! And the horror of the kind of love which uneasiness alone has engendered lies in the fact that we turn over and over incessantly in our cage the most trivial utterances; not to mention that rarely do the people for whom we feel this love appeal to us physically in a complex fashion, since it is not our deliberate preference, but the chance of a minute of anguish, a minute indefinitely prolonged by our weakness of character, which repeats its experi-

THE CAPTIVE

ments every evening until it yields to sedatives, that chooses for us.

No doubt my love for Albertine was not the most barren of those to which, through feebleness of will, a man may descend, for it was not entirely platonic; she did give me carnal satisfaction and, besides, she was intelligent. But all this was a superfluity. What occupied my mind was not the intelligent remark that she might have made, but some chance utterance that had aroused in me a doubt as to her actions; I tried to remember whether she had said this or that, in what tone, at what moment, in response to what speech of mine, to reconstruct the whole scene of her dialogue with me, to recall at what moment she had expressed a desire to call upon the Verdurins, what words of mine had brought that look of vexation to her face. The most important matter might have been in question, without my giving myself so much trouble to establish the truth, to restore the proper atmosphere and colour. No doubt, after these anxieties have intensified to a degree which we find insupportable, we do sometimes manage to soothe them altogether for an evening. The party to which the mistress whom we love is engaged to go, the true nature of which our mind has been toiling for days to discover, we are invited to it also, our mistress has neither looks nor words for anyone but ourself, we take her home and then we enjoy, all our anxieties dispelled, a repose as complete, as healing, as that which we enjoy at times in the profound sleep that comes after a long walk. And no doubt such repose deserves that we should pay a high price for it. But would it not have been more simple not to purchase for ourself, deliberately, the preceding anxiety, and

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

at a higher price still? Besides, we know all too well that however profound these momentary relaxations may be, anxiety will still be the stronger. Sometimes indeed it is revived by the words that were intended to bring us repose. But as a rule, all that we do is to change our anxiety. One of the words of the sentence that was meant to calm us sets our suspicions running upon another trail. The demands of our jealousy and the blindness of our credulity are greater than the woman whom we love could ever suppose.

When, of her own accord, she swears to us that some man is nothing more to her than a friend, she appals us by informing us—a thing we never suspected—that he has been her friend. While she is telling us, in proof of her sincerity, how they took tea together, that very afternoon, at each word that she utters the invisible, the unsuspected takes shape before our eyes. She admits that he has asked her to be his mistress, and we suffer agonies at the thought that she can have listened to his overtures. She refused them, she says. But presently, when we recall what she told us, we shall ask ourselves whether her story is really true, for there is wanting, between the different things that she said to us, that logical and necessary connexion which, more than the facts related, is a sign of the truth. Besides, there was that terrible note of scorn in her: “I said to him no, absolutely,” which is to be found in every class of society, when a woman is lying. We must nevertheless thank her for having refused, encourage her by our kindness to repeat these cruel confidences in the future. At the most, we may remark: “But if he had already made advances to you, why did you accept his invitation to tea?” “So that he should

THE CAPTIVE

not be angry with me and say that I hadn't been nice to him." And we dare not reply that by refusing she would perhaps have been nicer to us.

Albertine alarmed me further when she said that I was quite right to say, out of regard for her reputation, that I was not her lover, since "for that matter," she went on, "it's perfectly true that you aren't." I was not her lover perhaps in the full sense of the word, but then, was I to suppose that all the things that we did together she did also with all the other men whose mistress she swore to me that she had never been? The desire to know at all costs what Albertine was thinking, whom she was seeing, with whom she was in love, how strange it was that I should be sacrificing everything to this need, since I had felt the same need to know, in the case of Gilberte, names, facts, which now left me quite indifferent. I was perfectly well aware that in themselves Albertine's actions were of no greater interest. It is curious that a first love, if by the frail state in which it leaves our heart it opens the way to our subsequent loves, does not at least provide us, in view of the identity of symptoms and sufferings, with the means of curing them.

After all, is there any need to know a fact? Are we not aware beforehand, in a general fashion, of the mendacity and even the discretion of those women who have something to conceal? Is there any possibility of error? They make a virtue of their silence, when we would give anything to make them speak. And we feel certain that they have assured their accomplice: "I never tell anything. It won't be through me that anybody will hear about it, I never tell anything." A man may give his fortune, his life for a person, and yet know quite well that

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

in ten years' time, more or less, he would refuse her the fortune, prefer to keep his life. For then the person would be detached from him, alone, that is to say null and void. What attaches us to people are those thousand roots, those innumerable threads which are our memories of last night, our hopes for to-morrow morning, those continuous trammels of habit from which we can never free ourself. Just as there are misers who hoard money from generosity, so we are spendthrifts who spend from avarice, and it is not so much to a person that we sacrifice our life as to all that the person has been able to attach to herself of our hours, our days, of the things compared with which the life not yet lived, the relatively future life, seems to us more remote, more detached, less practical, less our own. What we require is to disentangle ourself from those trammels which are so much more important than the person, but they have the effect of creating in us temporary obligations towards her, obligations which mean that we dare not leave her for fear of being misjudged by her, whereas later on we would so dare, for, detached from us, she would no longer be ourself, and because in reality we create for ourself obligations (even if, by an apparent contradiction, they should lead to suicide) towards ourself alone.

If I was not in love with Albertine (and of this I could not be sure) then there was nothing extraordinary in the place that she occupied in my life: we live only with what we do not love, with what we have brought to live with us only to kill the intolerable love, whether it be of a woman, of a place, or again of a woman embodying a place. Indeed we should be sorely afraid to begin to love again if a further separation were to occur. I had

THE CAPTIVE

not yet reached this stage with Albertine. Her falsehoods, her admissions, left me to complete the task of elucidating the truth: her innumerable falsehoods because she was not content with merely lying, like everyone who imagines that he or she is loved, but was by nature, quite apart from this, a liar, and so inconsistent moreover that, even if she told me the truth every time, told me what, for instance, she thought of other people, she would say each time something different; her admissions, because, being so rare, so quickly cut short, they left between them, in so far as they concerned the past, huge intervals quite blank over the whole expanse of which I was obliged to retrace—and for that first of all to learn—her life.

As for the present, so far as I could interpret the sibylline utterances of Françoise, it was not only in particular details, it was as a whole that Albertine was lying to me, and “one fine day” I would see what Françoise made a pretence of knowing, what she refused to tell me, what I dared not ask her. It was no doubt with the same jealousy that she had felt in the past with regard to Eulalie that Françoise would speak of the most improbable things, so vague that one could at the most suppose them to convey the highly improbable insinuation that the poor captive (who was a lover of women) preferred marriage with somebody who did not appear altogether to be myself. If this were so, how, notwithstanding her power of radiotelepathy, could Françoise have come to hear of it? Certainly, Albertine’s statements could give me no definite enlightenment, for they were as different day by day as the colours of a spinning-top that has almost come to a standstill. However, it seemed that it was hatred, more than anything else, that impelled Françoise to

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

speaking. Not a day went by but she said to me, and I in my mother's absence endured such speeches as:

"To be sure, you yourself are kind, and I shall never forget the debt of gratitude that I owe to you" (this probably so that I might establish fresh claims upon her gratitude) "but the house has become a plague-spot now that kindness has set up knavery in it, now that cleverness is protecting the stupidest person that ever was seen, now that refinement, good manners, wit, dignity in everything allow to lay down the law and rule the roast and put me to shame, who have been forty years in the family,—vice, everything that is most vulgar and abject."

What Françoise resented most about Albertine was having to take orders from somebody who was not one of ourselves, and also the strain of the additional housework which was affecting the health of our old servant, who would not, for all that, accept any help in the house, not being a "good for nothing." This in itself would have accounted for her nervous exhaustion, for her furious hatred. Certainly, she would have liked to see Albertine-Esther banished from the house. This was Françoise's dearest wish. And, by consoling her, its fulfilment alone would have given our old servant some repose. But to my mind there was more in it than this. So violent a hatred could have originated only in an overstrained body. And, more even than of consideration, Françoise was in need of sleep.

Albertine went to take off her things and, so as to lose no time in finding out what I wanted to know, I attempted to telephone to Andrée; I took hold of the receiver, invoked the implacable deities, but succeeded only in arous-

THE CAPTIVE

ing their fury which expressed itself in the single word "Engaged!" Andrée was indeed engaged in talking to some one else. As I waited for her to finish her conversation, I asked myself how it was—now that so many of our painters are seeking to revive the feminine portraits of the eighteenth century, in which the cleverly devised setting is a pretext for portraying expressions of expectation, spleen, interest, distraction—how it was that none of our modern Bouchers or Fragonards had yet painted, instead of "The Letter" or "The Harpsichord," this scene which might be entitled "At the Telephone," in which there would come spontaneously to the lips of the listener a smile all the more genuine in that it is conscious of being unobserved. At length, Andrée was at the other end: "You are coming to call for Albertine to-morrow?" I asked, and as I uttered Albertine's name, thought of the envy I had felt for Swann when he said to me on the day of the Princesse de Guermantes's party: "Come and see Odette," and I had thought how, when all was said, there must be something in a Christian name which, in the eyes of the whole world including Odette herself, had on Swann's lips alone this entirely possessive sense.

Must not such an act of possession—summed up in a single word—over the whole existence of another person (I had felt whenever I was in love) be pleasant indeed! But, as a matter of fact, when we are in a position to utter it, either we no longer care, or else habit has not dulled the force of affection, but has changed its pleasure into pain. Falsehood is a very small matter, we live in the midst of it without doing anything but smile at it, we practise it without meaning to do any harm to anyone, but our jealousy is wounded by it, and sees more than

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the falsehood conceals (often our mistress refuses to spend the evening with us and goes to the theatre simply so that we shall not notice that she is not looking well). How blind it often remains to what the truth is concealing! But it can extract nothing, for those women who swear that they are not lying would refuse, on the scaffold, to confess their true character. I knew that I alone was in a position to say "Albertine" in that tone to Andrée. And yet, to Albertine, to Andrée, and to myself, I felt that I was nothing. And I realised the impossibility against which love is powerless.

We imagine that love has as its object a person whom we can see lying down before our eyes, enclosed in a human body. Alas, it is the extension of that person to all the points in space and time which the person has occupied and will occupy. If we do not possess its contact with this or that place, this or that hour, we do not possess it. But we cannot touch all these points. If only they were indicated to us, we might perhaps contrive to reach out to them. But we grope for them without finding them. Hence mistrust, jealousy, persecutions. We waste precious time upon absurd clues and pass by the truth without suspecting it.

But already one of the irascible deities, whose servants speed with the agility of lightning, was annoyed, not because I was speaking, but because I was saying nothing. "Come along, I've been holding the line for you all this time; I shall cut you off." However, she did nothing of the sort but, as she evoked Andrée's presence, enveloped it, like the great poet that a telephone girl always is, in the atmosphere peculiar to the home, the district, the very life itself of Albertine's friend. "Is that you?"

THE CAPTIVE

asked Andrée, whose voice was projected towards me with an instantaneous speed by the goddess whose privilege it is to make sound more swift than light. "Listen," I replied; "go wherever you like, anywhere, except to Mme. Verdurin's. Whatever happens, you simply must keep Albertine away from there to-morrow." "Why, that's where she promised to go to-morrow." "Ah!"

But I was obliged to break off the conversation for a moment and to make menacing gestures, for if Françoise continued—as though it had been something as unpleasant as vaccination or as dangerous as the aeroplane—to refuse to learn to telephone, whereby she would have spared us the trouble of conversations which she might intercept without any harm, on the other hand she would at once come into the room whenever I was engaged in a conversation so private that I was particularly anxious to keep it from her ears. When she had left the room, not without lingering to take away various things that had been lying there since the previous day and might perfectly well have been left there for an hour longer, and to place in the grate a log that was quite unnecessary in view of my burning fever at the intruder's presence and my fear of finding myself "cut off" by the operator: "I beg your pardon," I said to Andrée, "I was interrupted. Is it absolutely certain that she has to go to the Verdurins' to-morrow?" "Absolutely, but I can tell her that you don't like it." "No, not at all, but it is possible that I may come with you." "Ah!" said Andrée, in a tone of extreme annoyance and as though alarmed by my audacity, which was all the more encouraged by her opposition. "Then I shall say good night, and please forgive me for disturbing you for nothing." "Not at all," said

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Andrée, and (since nowadays, the telephone having come into general use, a decorative ritual of polite speeches has grown up round it, as round the tea-tables of the past) added: "It has been a great pleasure to hear your voice."

I might have said the same, and with greater truth than Andrée, for I had been deeply touched by the sound of her voice, having never before noticed that it was so different from the voices of other people. Then I recalled other voices still, women's voices especially, some of them rendered slow by the precision of a question and by mental concentration, others made breathless, even silenced at moments, by the lyrical flow of what the speakers were relating; I recalled one by one the voices of all the girls whom I had known at Balbec, then Gilberte's voice, then my grandmother's, then that of Mme. de Guermantes, I found them all unlike, moulded in a language peculiar to each of the speakers, each playing upon a different instrument, and I said to myself how meagre must be the concert performed in paradise by the three or four angel musicians of the old painters, when I saw mount to the Throne of God, by tens, by hundreds, by thousands, the harmonious and multisonant salutation of all the Voices. I did not leave the telephone without thanking, in a few propitiatory words, her who reigns over the swiftness of sounds for having kindly employed on behalf of my humble words a power which made them a hundred times more rapid than thunder, but my thanksgiving received no other response than that of being cut off.

When Albertine returned to my room, she was wearing a garment of black satin which had the effect of making her seem paler, of turning her into the pallid, ardent Parisian, etiolated by want of fresh air, by the atmosphere

THE CAPTIVE

of crowds and perhaps by vicious habits, whose eyes seemed more restless because they were not brightened by any colour in her cheeks.

"Guess," I said to her, "to whom I've just been talking on the telephone. Andrée!" "Andrée?" exclaimed Albertine in a harsh tone of astonishment and emotion, which so simple a piece of intelligence seemed hardly to require. "I hope she remembered to tell you that we met Mme. Verdurin the other day." "Mme. Verdurin? I don't remember," I replied, as though I were thinking of something else, so as to appear indifferent to this meeting and not to betray Andrée who had told me where Albertine was going on the morrow.

But how could I tell that Andrée was not herself betraying me, and would not tell Albertine to-morrow that I had asked her to prevent her at all costs from going to the Verdurins', and had not already revealed to her that I had many times made similar appeals. She had assured me that she had never repeated anything, but the value of this assertion was counterbalanced in my mind by the impression that for some time past Albertine's face had ceased to shew that confidence which she had for so long reposed in me.

What is remarkable is that, a few days before this dispute with Albertine, I had already had a dispute with her, but in Andrée's presence. Now Andrée, while she gave Albertine good advice, had always appeared to be insinuating bad. "Come, don't talk like that, hold your tongue," she said, as though she were at the acme of happiness. Her face assumed the dry raspberry hue of those pious housekeepers who make us dismiss each of our servants in turn. While I was heaping reproaches

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

upon Albertine which I ought never to have uttered, Andrée looked as though she were sucking a lump of barley sugar with keen enjoyment. At length she was unable to restrain an affectionate laugh. "Come, Titine, with me. You know, I'm your dear little sister." I was not merely exasperated by this rather sickly exhibition, I asked myself whether Andrée really felt the affection for Albertine that she pretended to feel. Seeing that Albertine, who knew Andrée far better than I did, had always shrugged her shoulders when I asked her whether she was quite certain of Andrée's affection, and had always answered that nobody in the world cared for her more, I was still convinced that Andrée's affection was sincere. Possibly, in her wealthy but provincial family, one might find an equivalent of some of the shops in the Cathedral square, where certain sweetmeats are declared to be "the best quality." But I do know that, for my own part, even if I had invariably come to the opposite conclusion, I had so strong an impression that Andrée was trying to rap Albertine's knuckles that my mistress at once regained my affection and my anger subsided.

Suffering, when we are in love, ceases now and then for a moment, but only to recur in a different form. We weep to see her whom we love no longer respond to us with those outbursts of sympathy, the amorous advances of former days, we suffer more keenly still when, having lost them with us, she recovers them for the benefit of others; then, from this suffering, we are distracted by a new and still more piercing grief, the suspicion that she was lying to us about how she spent the previous evening, when she doubtless played us false; this suspicion in turn is dispelled, the kindness that our mistress is

THE CAPTIVE

shewing us soothes us, but then a word that we had forgotten comes back to our mind; some one has told us that she was ardent in moments of pleasure, whereas we have always found her calm; we try to picture to ourself what can have been these frenzies with other people, we feel how very little we are to her, we observe an air of boredom, longing, melancholy, while we are talking, we observe like a black sky the unpretentious clothes which she puts on when she is with us, keeping for other people the garments with which she used to flatter us at first. If on the contrary she is affectionate, what joy for a moment; but when we see that little tongue outstretched as though in invitation, we think of those people to whom that invitation has so often been addressed, and that perhaps even here at home, even although Albertine was not thinking of them, it has remained, by force of long habit, an automatic signal. Then the feeling that we are bored with each other returns. But suddenly this pain is reduced to nothing when we think of the unknown evil element in her life, of the places impossible to identify where she has been, where she still goes perhaps at the hours when we are not with her, if indeed she is not planning to live there altogether, those places in which she is parted from us, does not belong to us, is happier than when she is with us. Such are the revolving searchlights of jealousy.

Jealousy is moreover a demon that cannot be exorcised, but always returns to assume a fresh incarnation. Even if we could succeed in exterminating them all, in keeping for ever her whom we love, the Spirit of Evil would then adopt another form, more pathetic still, despair at having obtained fidelity only by force, despair at not being loved.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Between Albertine and myself there was often the obstacle of a silence based no doubt upon grievances which she kept to herself, because she supposed them to be irremediable. Charming as Albertine was on some evenings, she no longer shewed those spontaneous impulses which I remembered at Balbec when she used to say: "How good you are to me all the same!" and her whole heart seemed to spring towards me without the reservation of any of those grievances which she now felt and kept to herself because she supposed them no doubt to be irremediable, impossible to forget, unconfessed, but which set up nevertheless between her and myself the significant prudence of her speech or the interval of an impassable silence.

"And may one be allowed to know why you telephoned to Andrée?" "To ask whether she had any objection to my joining you to-morrow, so that I may pay the Verdurins the call I promised them at la Raspelière." "Just as you like. But I warn you, there is an appalling mist this evening, and it's sure to last over to-morrow. I mention it, because I shouldn't like you to make yourself ill. Personally, you can imagine I would far rather you came with us. However," she added with a thoughtful air: "I'm not at all sure that I shall go to the Verdurins. They've been so kind to me that I ought, really. . . . Next to yourself, they have been nicer to me than anybody, but there are some things about them that I don't quite like. I simply must go to the Bon Marché and the Trois-Quartiers and get a white scarf to wear with this dress which is really too black."

Allow Albertine to go by herself into a big shop crowded with people perpetually rubbing against one, furnished

THE CAPTIVE

with so many doors that a woman can always say that when she came out she could not find the carriage which was waiting farther along the street; I was quite determined never to consent to such a thing, but the thought of it made me extremely unhappy. And yet I did not take into account that I ought long ago to have ceased to see Albertine, for she had entered, in my life, upon that lamentable period in which a person disseminated over space and time is no longer a woman, but a series of events upon which we can throw no light, a series of insoluble problems, a sea which we absurdly attempt, Xerxes-like, to scourge, in order to punish it for what it has engulfed. Once this period has begun, we are perforce vanquished. Happy are they who understand this in time not to prolong unduly a futile, exhausting struggle, hemmed in on every side by the limits of the imagination, a struggle in which jealousy plays so sorry a part that the same man who once upon a time, if the eyes of the woman who was always by his side rested for an instant upon another man, imagined an intrigue, suffered endless torments, resigns himself in time to allowing her to go out by herself, sometimes with the man whom he knows to be her lover, preferring to the unknown this torture which at least he does know! It is a question of the rhythm to be adopted, which afterwards one follows from force of habit. Neurotics who could never stay away from a dinner-party will afterwards take rest cures which never seem to them to last long enough; women who recently were still of easy virtue live for and by acts of penitence. Jealous lovers who, in order to keep a watch upon her whom they loved, cut short their own hours of sleep, deprived themselves of rest, feeling that

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

her own personal desires, the world, so vast and so secret, time are stronger than they, allow her to go out without them, then to travel, and finally separate from her. Jealousy thus perishes for want of nourishment and has survived so long only by clamouring incessantly for fresh food. I was still a long way from this state.

I was now at liberty to go out with Albertine as often as I chose. As there had recently sprung up all round Paris a number of aerodromes, which are to aeroplanes what harbours are to ships, and as ever since the day when, on the way to la Raspelière, that almost mythological encounter with an airman, at whose passage overhead my horse had shied, had been to me like a symbol of liberty, I often chose to end our day's excursion—with the ready approval of Albertine, a passionate lover of every form of sport—at one of these aerodromes. We went there, she and I, attracted by that incessant stir of departure and arrival which gives so much charm to a stroll along the pier, or merely upon the beach, to those who love the sea, and to loitering about an "aviation centre" to those who love the sky. At any moment, amid the repose of the machines that lay inert and as though at anchor, we would see one, laboriously pushed by a number of mechanics, as a boat is pushed down over the sand at the bidding of a tourist who wishes to go for an hour upon the sea. Then the engine was started, the machine ran along the ground, gathered speed, until finally, all of a sudden, at right angles, it rose slowly, in the awkward, as it were paralysed ecstasy of a horizontal speed suddenly transformed into a majestic, vertical ascent. Albertine could not contain her joy, and demanded explanations of the mechanics who, now that the

THE CAPTIVE

machine was in the air, were strolling back to the sheds. The passenger, meanwhile, was covering mile after mile; the huge skiff, upon which our eyes remained fixed, was nothing more now in the azure than a barely visible spot, which, however, would gradually recover its solidity, size, volume, when, as the time allowed for the excursion drew to an end, the moment came for landing. And we watched with envy, Albertine and I, as he sprang to earth, the passenger who had gone up like that to enjoy at large in those solitary expanses the calm and limpidity of evening. Then, whether from the aerodrome or from some museum, some church that we had been visiting, we would return home together for dinner. And yet, I did not return home calmed, as I used to be at Balbec by less frequent excursions which I rejoiced to see extend over a whole afternoon, used afterwards to contemplate standing out like clustering flowers from the rest of Albertine's life, as against an empty sky, before which we muse pleasantly, without thinking. Albertine's time did not belong to me then in such ample quantities as to-day. And yet, it had seemed to me then to be much more my own, because I took into account only—my love rejoicing in them as in the bestowal of a favour—the hours that she spent with me; now—my jealousy searching anxiously among them for the possibility of a betrayal—only those hours that she spent apart from me.

Well, on the morrow she was looking forward to some such hours. I must choose, either to cease from suffering, or to cease from loving. For, just as in the beginning it is formed by desire, so afterwards love is kept in existence only by painful anxiety. I felt that part of Albertine's life was escaping me. Love, in the painful

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

anxiety as in the blissful desire, is the insistence upon a whole. It is born, it survives only if some part remains for it to conquer. We love only what we do not wholly possess. Albertine was lying when she told me that she probably would not go to the Verdurins', as I was lying when I said that I wished to go there. She was seeking merely to dissuade me from accompanying her, and I, by my abrupt announcement of this plan, which I had no intention of putting into practice, to touch what I felt to be her most sensitive spot, to track down the desire that she was concealing and to force her to admit that my company on the morrow would prevent her from gratifying it. She had virtually made this admission by ceasing at once to wish to go to see the Verdurins.

"If you don't want to go to the Verdurins'," I told her, "there is a splendid charity show at the Trocadéro." She listened to my urging her to attend it with a sorrowful air. I began to be harsh with her as at Balbec, at the time of my first jealousy. Her face reflected a disappointment, and I employed, to reproach my mistress, the same arguments that had been so often advanced against myself by my parents when I was little, and had appeared unintelligent and cruel to my misunderstood childhood. "No, for all your melancholy air," I said to Albertine, "I cannot feel any pity for you; I should feel sorry for you if you were ill, if you were in trouble, if you had suffered some bereavement; not that you would mind that in the least, I dare say, since you pour out false sentiment over every trifle. Anyhow, I have no opinion of the feelings of people who pretend to be so fond of us and are quite incapable of doing us the slightest service, and whose minds wander so that they forget to deliver the letter we

THE CAPTIVE

have entrusted to them, on which our whole future depends."

These words—a great part of what we say being no more than a recitation from memory—I had heard spoken, all of them, by my mother, who was ever ready to explain to me that we ought not to confuse true feeling, what (she said) the Germans, whose language she greatly admired notwithstanding my father's horror of their nation, called *Empfindung*, and affectation or *Empfindelei*. She had gone so far, once when I was in tears, as to tell me that Nero probably suffered from his nerves and was none the better for that. Indeed, like those plants which bifurcate as they grow, side by side with the sensitive boy which was all that I had been, there was now a man of the opposite sort, full of common sense, of severity towards the morbid sensibility of others, a man resembling what my parents had been to me. No doubt, as each of us is obliged to continue in himself the life of his forebears, the balanced, cynical man who did not exist in me at the start had joined forces with the sensitive one, and it was natural that I should become in my turn what my parents had been to me.

What is more, at the moment when this new personality took shape in me, he found his language ready made in the memory of the speeches, ironical and scolding, that had been addressed to me, that I must now address to other people, and which came so naturally to my lips, whether I evoked them by mimicry and association of memories, or because the delicate and mysterious enchantments of the reproductive power had traced in me unawares, as upon the leaf of a plant, the same intonations, the same gestures, the same attitudes as had been

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

adopted by the people from whom I sprang. For sometimes, as I was playing the wise counsellor in conversation with Albertine, I seemed to be listening to my grandmother; had it not, moreover, occurred to my mother (so many obscure unconscious currents inflected everything in me down to the tiniest movements of my fingers even, to follow the same cycles as those of my parents) to imagine that it was my father at the door, so similar was my knock to his.

On the other hand the coupling of contrary elements is the law of life, the principle of fertilisation, and, as we shall see, the cause of many disasters. As a general rule, we detest what resembles ourselves, and our own faults when observed in another person infuriate us. How much the more does a man who has passed the age at which we instinctively display them, a man who, for instance, has gone through the most burning moments with an icy countenance, execrate those same faults, if it is another man, younger or simpler or stupider, that is displaying them. There are sensitive people to whom merely to see in other people's eyes the tears which they themselves have repressed is infuriating. It is because the similarity is too great that, in spite of family affection, and sometimes all the more the greater the affection is, families are divided.

Possibly in myself, and in many others, the second man that I had become was simply another aspect of the former man, excitable and sensitive in his own affairs, a sage mentor to other people. Perhaps it was so also with my parents according to whether they were regarded in relation to myself or in themselves. In the case of my grandmother and mother it was as clear as daylight that

THE CAPTIVE

their severity towards myself was deliberate on their part and indeed cost them a serious effort, but perhaps in my father himself his coldness was but an external aspect of his sensibility. For it was perhaps the human truth of this twofold aspect: the side of private life, the side of social relations, that was expressed in a sentence which seemed to me at the time as false in its matter as it was commonplace in form, when some one remarked, speaking of my father: "Beneath his icy chill, he conceals an extraordinary sensibility; what is really wrong with him is that he is ashamed of his own feelings."

Did it not, after all, conceal incessant secret storms, that calm (interspersed if need be with sententious reflexions, irony at the maladroit exhibitions of sensibility) which was his, but which now I too was affecting in my relations with everybody and never laid aside in certain circumstances of my relations with Albertine?

I really believe that I came near that day to making up my mind to break with her and to start for Venice. What bound me afresh in my chains had to do with Normandy, not that she shewed any inclination to go to that region where I had been jealous of her (for it was my good fortune that her plans never impinged upon the painful spots in my memory), but because when I had said to her: "It is just as though I were to speak to you of your aunt's friend who lived at Infreville," she replied angrily, delighted—like everyone in a discussion, who is anxious to muster as many arguments as possible on his side—to shew me that I was in the wrong and herself in the right: "But my aunt never knew anybody at Infreville, and I have never been near the place."

She had forgotten the lie that she had told me one

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

afternoon about the susceptible lady with whom she simply must take tea, even if by going to visit this lady she were to forfeit my friendship and shorten her own life. I did not remind her of her lie. But it appalled me. And once again I postponed our rupture to another day. A person has no need of sincerity, nor even of skill in lying, in order to be loved. I here give the name of love to a mutual torment. I saw nothing reprehensible this evening in speaking to her as my grandmother—that mirror of perfection—used to speak to me, nor, when I told her that I would escort her to the Verdurins', in having adopted my father's abrupt manner, who would never inform us of any decision except in the manner calculated to cause us the maximum of agitation, out of all proportion to the decision itself. So that it was easy for him to call us absurd for appearing so distressed by so small a matter, our distress corresponding in reality to the emotion that he had aroused in us. Since—like the inflexible wisdom of my grandmother—these arbitrary moods of my father had been passed on to myself to complete the sensitive nature to which they had so long remained alien, and, throughout my whole childhood, had caused so much suffering, that sensitive nature informed them very exactly as to the points at which they must take careful aim: there is no better informer than a reformed thief, or a subject of the nation we are fighting. In certain untruthful families, a brother who has come to call upon his brother without any apparent reason and asks him, quite casually, on the doorstep, as he is going away, for some information to which he does not even appear to listen, indicates thereby to his brother that this information was the main object of his visit, for the brother is

THE CAPTIVE

quite familiar with that air of detachment, those words uttered as though in parentheses and at the last moment, having frequently had recourse to them himself. Well, there are also pathological families, kindred sensibilities, fraternal temperaments, initiated into that mute language which enables people in the family circle to make themselves understood without speaking. And who can be more nerve-wracking than a neurotic? Besides, my conduct, in these cases, may have had a more general, a more profound cause. I mean that in those brief but inevitable moments, when we detest some one whom we love—moments which last sometimes for a whole lifetime in the case of people whom we do not love—we do not wish to appear good, so as not to be pitied, but at once as wicked and as happy as possible so that our happiness may be truly hateful and may ulcerate the soul of the occasional or permanent enemy. To how many people have I not untruthfully slandered myself, simply in order that my “successes” might seem to them immoral and make them all the more angry! The proper thing to do would be to take the opposite course, to shew without arrogance that we have generous feelings, instead of taking such pains to hide them. And it would be easy if we were able never to hate, to love all the time. For then we should be so glad to say only the things that can make other people happy, melt their hearts, make them love us.

To be sure, I felt some remorse at being so irritating to Albertine, and said to myself: “If I did not love her, she would be more grateful to me, for I should not be nasty to her; but no, it would be the same in the end, for I should also be less nice.” And I might, in order to

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

justify myself, have told her that I loved her. But the confession of that love, apart from the fact that it could not have told Albertine anything new, would perhaps have made her colder to myself than the harshness and deceit for which love was the sole excuse. To be harsh and deceitful to the person whom we love is so natural! If the interest that we shew in other people does not prevent us from being kind to them and complying with their wishes, then our interest is not sincere. A stranger leaves us indifferent, and indifference does not prompt us to unkind actions.

The evening passed. Before Albertine went to bed, there was no time to lose if we wished to make peace, to renew our embraces. Neither of us had yet taken the initiative. Feeling that, anyhow, she was angry with me already, I took advantage of her anger to mention Esther Lévy. "Bloch tells me" (this was untrue) "that you are a great friend of his cousin Esther." "I shouldn't know her if I saw her," said Albertine with a vague air. "I have seen her photograph," I continued angrily. I did not look at Albertine as I said this, so that I did not see her expression, which would have been her sole reply, for she said nothing.

It was no longer the peace of my mother's kiss at Combray that I felt when I was with Albertine on these evenings, but, on the contrary, the anguish of those on which my mother scarcely bade me good night, or even did not come up at all to my room, whether because she was vexed with me or was kept downstairs by guests. This anguish—not merely its transposition in terms of love—no, this anguish itself which had at one time been specialised in love, which had been allocated to love alone when the

THE CAPTIVE

division, the distribution of the passions took effect, seemed now to be extending again to them all, become indivisible again as in my childhood, as though all my sentiments which trembled at the thought of my not being able to keep Albertine by my bedside, at once as a mistress, a sister, a daughter; as a mother too, of whose regular good-night kiss I was beginning again to feel the childish need, had begun to coalesce, to unify in the premature evening of my life which seemed fated to be as short as a day in winter. But if I felt the anguish of my childhood, the change of person that made me feel it, the difference of the sentiment that it inspired in me, the very transformation in my character, made it impossible for me to demand the soothing of that anguish from Albertine as in the old days from my mother.

I could no longer say: "I am unhappy." I confined myself, with death at my heart, to speaking of unimportant things which afforded me no progress towards a happy solution. I waded knee-deep in painful platitudes. And with that intellectual egoism which, if only some insignificant fact has a bearing upon our love, makes us pay great respect to the person who has discovered it, as fortuitously perhaps as the fortune-teller who has foretold some trivial event which has afterwards come to pass, I came near to regarding Françoise as more inspired than Bergotte and Elstir because she had said to me at Balbec: "That girl will only land you in trouble."

Every minute brought me nearer to Albertine's good night, which at length she said. But this evening her kiss, from which she herself was absent, and which did not encounter myself, left me so anxious that, with a throbbing heart, I watched her make her way to the door,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

thinking: "If I am to find a pretext for calling her back, keeping her here, making peace with her, I must make haste; only a few steps and she will be out of the room, only two, now one, she is turning the handle; she is opening the door, it is too late, she has shut it behind her!" Perhaps it was not too late, all the same. As in the old days at Combray when my mother had left me without soothing me with her kiss, I wanted to dart in pursuit of Albertine, I felt that there would be no peace for me until I had seen her again, that this next meeting was to be something immense which no such meeting had ever yet been, and that—if I did not succeed by my own efforts in ridding myself of this melancholy—I might perhaps acquire the shameful habit of going to beg from Albertine. I sprang out of bed when she was already in her room, I paced up and down the corridor, hoping that she would come out of her room and call me; I stood without breathing outside her door for fear of failing to hear some faint summons, I returned for a moment to my own room to see whether my mistress had not by some lucky chance forgotten her handkerchief, her bag, something which I might have appeared to be afraid of her wanting during the night, and which would have given me an excuse for going to her room. No, there was nothing. I returned to my station outside her door, but the crack beneath it no longer shewed any light. Albertine had put out the light, she was in bed, I remained there motionless, hoping for some lucky accident but none occurred; and long afterwards, frozen, I returned to bestow myself between my own sheets and cried all night long.

But there were certain evenings also when I had re-

THE CAPTIVE

course to a ruse which won me Albertine's kiss. Knowing how quickly sleep came to her as soon as she lay down (she knew it also, for, instinctively, before lying down, she would take off her slippers, which I had given her, and her ring which she placed by the bedside, as she did in her own room when she went to bed), knowing how heavy her sleep was, how affectionate her awakening, I would plead the excuse of going to look for something and make her lie down upon my bed. When I returned to the room she was asleep and I saw before me the other woman that she became whenever one saw her full face. But she very soon changed her identity, for I lay down by her side and recaptured her profile. I could place my hand in her hand, on her shoulder, on her cheek. Albertine continued to sleep.

I might take her head, turn it round, press it to my lips, encircle my neck in her arms, she continued to sleep like a watch that does not stop, like an animal that goes on living whatever position you assign to it, like a climbing plant, a convolvulus which continues to thrust out its tendrils whatever support you give it. Only her breathing was altered by every touch of my fingers, as though she had been an instrument on which I was playing and from which I extracted modulations by drawing from first one, then another of its strings different notes. My jealousy grew calm, for I felt that Albertine had become a creature that breathes, that is nothing else besides, as was indicated by that regular breathing in which is expressed that pure physiological function which, wholly fluid, has not the solidity either of speech or of silence; and, in its ignorance of all evil, her breath, drawn (it seemed) rather from a hollowed reed than from a human

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

being, was truly paradisal, was the pure song of the angels to me who, at these moments, felt Albertine to be withdrawn from everything, not only materially but morally. And yet in that breathing, I said to myself of a sudden that perhaps many names of people borne on the stream of memory must be playing. Sometimes indeed to that music the human voice was added. Albertine uttered a few words. How I longed to catch their meaning! It happened that the name of a person of whom we had been speaking and who had aroused my jealousy came to her lips, but without making me unhappy, for the memory that it brought with it seemed to be only that of the conversations that she had had with me upon the subject. This evening, however, when with her eyes still shut she was half awake, she said, addressing myself: "Andrée." I concealed my emotion. "You are dreaming, I am not Andrée," I said to her, smiling. She smiled also. "Of course not, I wanted to ask you what Andrée was saying to you." "I should have supposed that you were used to lying like this by her side." "Oh no, never," she said. Only, before making this reply, she had hidden her face for a moment in her hands. So her silences were merely screens, her surface affection merely kept beneath the surface a thousand memories which would have rent my heart, her life was full of those incidents the derisive account, the comic history of which form our daily gossip at the expense of other people, people who do not matter, but which, so long as a person remains lost in the dark forest of our heart, seem to us so precious a revelation of her life that, for the privilege of exploring that subterranean world, we would gladly sacrifice our own. Then her sleep appeared to

THE CAPTIVE

me a marvellous and magic world in which at certain moments there rises from the depths of the barely translucent element the confession of a secret which we shall not understand. But as a rule, when Albertine was asleep, she seemed to have recovered her innocence. In the attitude which I had imposed upon her, but which in her sleep she had speedily made her own, she looked as though she were trusting herself to me! Her face had lost any expression of cunning or vulgarity, and between herself and me, towards whom she was raising her arm, upon whom her hand was resting, there seemed to be an absolute surrender, an indissoluble attachment. Her sleep moreover did not separate her from me and allowed her to retain her consciousness of our affection; its effect was rather to abolish everything else; I embraced her, told her that I was going to take a turn outside, she half-opened her eyes, said to me with an air of astonishment—indeed the hour was late: “But where are you off to, my darling ——” calling me by my Christian name, and at once fell asleep again. Her sleep was only a sort of obliteration of the rest of her life, a continuous silence over which from time to time would pass in their flight words of intimate affection. By putting these words together, you would have arrived at the unalloyed conversation, the secret intimacy of a pure love. This calm slumber delighted me, as a mother is delighted, reckoning it among his virtues, by the sound sleep of her child. And her sleep was indeed that of a child. Her waking also, and so natural, so loving, before she even knew where she was, that I sometimes asked myself with terror whether she had been in the habit, before coming to live with me, of not sleeping by herself but of finding,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

when she opened her eyes, some one lying by her side. But her childish charm was more striking. Like a mother again, I marvelled that she should always awake in so good a humour. After a few moments she recovered consciousness, uttered charming words, unconnected with one another, mere bird-pipings. By a sort of "general post" her throat, which as a rule passed unnoticed, now almost startlingly beautiful, had acquired the immense importance which her eyes, by being closed in sleep, had forfeited, her eyes, my regular informants to which I could no longer address myself after the lids had closed over them. Just as the closed lids impart an innocent, grave beauty to the face by suppressing all that the eyes express only too plainly, there was in the words, not devoid of meaning, but interrupted by moments of silence, which Albertine uttered as she awoke, a pure beauty that is not at every moment polluted, as is conversation, by habits of speech, commonplaces, traces of blemish. Anyhow, when I had decided to wake Albertine, I had been able to do so without fear, I knew that her awakening would bear no relation to the evening that we had passed together, but would emerge from her sleep as morning emerges from night. As soon as she had begun to open her eyes with a smile, she had offered me her lips, and before she had even uttered a word, I had tasted their fresh savour, as soothing as that of a garden still silent before the break of day.

On the morrow of that evening when Albertine had told me that she would perhaps be going, then that she would not be going to see the Verdurins, I awoke early, and, while I was still half asleep, my joy informed me that there was, interpolated in the winter, a day of

THE CAPTIVE

spring. Outside, popular themes skilfully transposed for various instruments, from the horn of the mender of porcelain, or the trumpet of the chair weaver to the flute of the goat driver who seemed, on a fine morning, to be a Sicilian goatherd, were lightly orchestrating the matutinal air, with an "Overture for a Public Holiday." Our hearing, that delicious sense, brings us the company of the street, every line of which it traces for us, sketches all the figures that pass along it, shewing us their colours. The iron shutters of the baker's shop, of the dairy, which had been lowered last night over every possibility of feminine bliss, were rising now like the canvas of a ship which is setting sail and about to proceed, crossing the transparent sea, over a vision of young female assistants. This sound of the iron curtain being raised would perhaps have been my sole pleasure in a different part of the town. In this quarter a hundred other sounds contributed to my joy, of which I would not have lost a single one by remaining too long asleep. It is the magic charm of the old aristocratic quarters that they are at the same time plebeian. Just as, sometimes, cathedrals used to have them within a stone's throw of their porches (which have even preserved the name, like the porch of Rouen styled the Booksellers', because these latter used to expose their merchandise in the open air against its walls), so various minor trades, but peripatetic, used to pass in front of the noble Hôtel de Guermantes, and made one think at times of the ecclesiastical France of long ago. For the appeal which they launched at the little houses on either side had, with rare exceptions, nothing of a song. It differed from song as much as the declamation—barely coloured by imperceptible modulations—of *Boris Godounov* and *Pelléas*; but on the other hand recalled the psalmody of a

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

priest chanting his office of which these street scenes are but the good-humoured, secular, and yet half liturgical counterpart. Never had I so delighted in them as since Albertine had come to live with me; they seemed to me a joyous signal of her awakening, and by interesting me in the life of the world outside made me all the more conscious of the soothing virtue of a beloved presence, as constant as I could wish. Several of the foodstuffs cried in the street, which personally I detested, were greatly to Albertine's liking, so much so that Françoise used to send her young footman out to buy them, slightly humiliated perhaps at finding himself mingled with the plebeian crowd. Very distinct in this peaceful quarter (where the noise was no longer a cause of lamentation to Françoise and had become a source of pleasure to myself), there came to me, each with its different modulation, recitatives declaimed by those humble folk as they would be in the music—so entirely popular—of *Boris*, where an initial intonation is barely altered by the inflexion of one note which rests upon another, the music of the crowd which is more a language than a music. It was “ah! le bigorneau, deux sous le bigorneau,” which brought people running to the cornets in which were sold those horrid little shellfish, which, if Albertine had not been there, would have disgusted me, just as the snails disgusted me which I heard cried for sale at the same hour. Here again it was of the barely lyrical declamation of Moussorgsky that the vendor reminded me, but not of it alone. For after having almost “spoken”: “Les escargots, ils sont frais, ils sont beaux,” it was with the vague melancholy of Maeterlinck, transposed into music by Debussy, that the snail vendor, in one of those pathetic finales in which the composer of

THE CAPTIVE

Pelléas shews his kinship with Rameau: "If vanquished I must be, is it for thee to be my vanquisher?" added with a singsong melancholy: "On les vend six sous la douzaine. . . ."

I have always found it difficult to understand why these perfectly simple words were sighed in a tone so far from appropriate, mysterious, like the secret which makes everyone look sad in the old palace to which *Mélisande* has not succeeded in bringing joy, and profound as one of the thoughts of the aged *Arkel* who seeks to utter, in the simplest words, the whole lore of wisdom and destiny. The very notes upon which rises with an increasing sweetness the voice of the old King of *Allemonde* or that of *Goland*, to say: "We know not what is happening here, it may seem strange, maybe nought that happens is in vain," or else: "No cause here for alarm, 'twas a poor little mysterious creature, like all the world," were those which served the snail vendor to resume, in an endless cadenza: "On les vend six sous la douzaine. . . ." But this metaphysical lamentation had not time to expire upon the shore of the infinite, it was interrupted by a shrill trumpet. This time, it was no question of victuals, the words of the libretto were: "Tond les chiens, coupe les chats, les queues et les oreilles."

It was true that the fantasy, the spirit of each vendor or vendress frequently introduced variations into the words of all these chants that I used to hear from my bed. And yet a ritual suspension interposing a silence in the middle of a word, especially when it was repeated a second time, constantly reminded me of some old church. In his little cart drawn by a she-ass which he stopped in front of each house before entering the courtyard, the old-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

clothes man, brandishing a whip, intoned: "Habits, marchand d'habits, ha...bits" with the same pause between the final syllables as if he had been intoning in plainchant: "Per omnia saecula saeculo...rum" or "requiescat in pa...ce" albeit he had no reason to believe in the immortality of his clothes, nor did he offer them as cerements for the supreme repose in peace. And similarly, as the motives were beginning, even at this early hour, to become confused, a vegetable woman, pushing her little hand-cart, was using for her litany the Gregorian division:

A la tendresse, à la verdurese,
Artichauts tendres et beaux,
Arti...chauts.

although she had probably never heard of the antiphonal, or of the seven tones that symbolise four the sciences of the quadrivium and three those of the trivium.

Drawing from a penny whistle, from a bagpipe, airs of his own southern country whose sunlight harmonised well with these fine days, a man in a blouse, wielding a bull's pizzle in his hand and wearing a basque *béret* on his head, stopped before each house in turn. It was the goatherd with two dogs driving before him his string of goats. As he came from a distance, he arrived fairly late in our quarter; and the women came running out with bowls to receive the milk that was to give strength to their little ones. But with the Pyrenean airs of this good shepherd was now blended the bell of the grinder, who cried: "Couteaux, ciseaux, rasoirs." With him the saw-setter was unable to compete, for, lacking an instrument, he had to be content with calling: "Avez-vous des scies à

THE CAPTIVE

repasser, v'là le repasseur," while in a gayer mood the tinker, after enumerating the pots, pans and everything else that he repaired, intoned the refrain:

Tam, tam, tam,
C'est moi qui rétame
Même le macadam,
C'est moi qui mets des fonds partout,
Qui bouche tous les trous, trou, trou;

and young Italians carrying big iron boxes painted red, upon which the numbers—winning and losing—were marked, and springing their rattles, gave the invitation: "Amusez-vous, mesdames, v'là le plaisir."

Françoise brought in the *Figaro*. A glance was sufficient to shew me that my article had not yet appeared. She told me that Albertine had asked whether she might come to my room and sent word that she had quite given up the idea of calling upon the Verdurins, and had decided to go, as I had advised her, to the "special" matinée at the Trocadéro—what nowadays would be called, though with considerably less significance, a "gala" matinée—after a short ride which she had promised to take with Andrée. Now that I knew that she had renounced her desire, possibly evil, to go and see Mme. Verdurin, I said with a laugh: "Tell her to come in," and told myself that she might go where she chose and that it was all the same to me. I knew that by the end of the afternoon, when dusk began to fall, I should probably be a different man, moping, attaching to every one of Albertine's movements an importance that they did not possess at this morning hour when the weather was so fine. For my indifference was accompanied by a clear notion of its cause, but was in no way modified by it.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

"Françoise assured me that you were awake and that I should not be disturbing you," said Albertine as she entered the room. And since next to making me catch cold by opening the window at the wrong moment, what Albertine most dreaded was to come into my room when I was asleep: "I hope I have not done anything wrong," she went on. "I was afraid you would say to me: What insolent mortal comes here to meet his doom?" and she laughed that laugh which I always found so disturbing. I replied in the same vein of pleasantry: "Was it for you this stern decree was made?"—and, lest she should ever venture to break it, added: "Although I should be furious if you did wake me." "I know, I know, don't be frightened," said Albertine. And, to relieve the situation, I went on, still enacting the scene from *Esther* with her, while in the street below the cries continued, drowned by our conversation: "I find in you alone a certain grace That charms me and of which I never tire" (and to myself I thought: "yes, she does tire me very often"). And remembering what she had said to me overnight, as I thanked her extravagantly for having given up the Verdurins, so that another time she would obey me similarly with regard to something else, I said: "Albertine, you distrust me who love you and you place your trust in other people who do not love you" (as though it were not natural to distrust the people who love us and who alone have an interest in lying to us in order to find out things, to hinder us), and added these lying words: "You don't really believe that I love you, which is amusing. As a matter of fact, I don't *adore* you." She lied in her turn when she told me that she trusted nobody but myself and then became sincere

THE CAPTIVE

when she assured me that she knew very well that I loved her. But this affirmation did not seem to imply that she did not believe me to be a liar and a spy. And she seemed to pardon me as though she had seen these defects to be the agonising consequence of a strong passion or as though she herself had felt herself to be less good: "I beg of you, my dearest girl, no more of that *haute voltige* you were practising the other day. Just think, Albertine, if you were to meet with an accident!" Of course I did not wish her any harm. But what a pleasure it would be if, with her horses, she should take it into her head to ride off somewhere, wherever she chose, and never to return again to my house. How it would simplify everything, that she should go and live happily somewhere else, I did not even wish to know where. "Oh! I know you wouldn't survive me for more than a day; you would commit suicide."

So we exchanged lying speeches. But a truth more profound than that which we would utter were we sincere may sometimes be expressed and announced by another channel than that of sincerity: "You don't mind all that noise outside," she asked me; "I love it. But you're such a light sleeper anyhow." I was on the contrary an extremely heavy sleeper (as I have already said, but I am obliged to repeat it in view of what follows), especially when I did not begin to sleep until the morning. As this kind of sleep is—on an average—four times as refreshing, it seems to the awakened sleeper to have lasted four times as long, when it has really been four times as short. A splendid, sixteenfold error in multiplication which gives so much beauty to our awakening and makes life begin again on a different scale, like those

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

great changes of rhythm which, in music, mean that in an andante a quaver has the same duration as a minim in a prestissimo, and which are unknown in our waking state. There life is almost always the same, whence the disappointments of travel. It may seem indeed that our dreams are composed of the coarsest stuff of life, but that stuff is treated, kneaded so thoroughly, with a protraction due to the fact that none of the temporal limitations of the waking state is there to prevent it from spinning itself out to heights so vast that we fail to recognise it. On the mornings after this good fortune had befallen me, after the sponge of sleep had obliterated from my brain the signs of everyday occupations that are traced upon it as upon a blackboard, I was obliged to bring my memory back to life; by the exercise of our will we can recapture what the amnesia of sleep or of a stroke has made us forget, what gradually returns to us as our eyes open or our paralysis disappears. I had lived through so many hours in a few minutes that, wishing to address Françoise, for whom I had rung, in language that corresponded to the facts of real life and was regulated by the clock, I was obliged to exert all my power of internal repression in order not to say: "Well, Françoise, here we are at five o'clock in the evening and I haven't set eyes on you since yesterday afternoon." And seeking to dispel my dreams, giving them the lie and lying to myself as well, I said boldly, compelling myself with all my might to silence, the direct opposite: "Françoise, it must be at least ten!" I did not even say ten o'clock in the morning, but simply ten, so that this incredible hour might appear to be uttered in a more natural tone. And yet to say these words, instead of those that continued to run in the mind

THE CAPTIVE

of the half-awakened sleeper that I still was, demanded the same effort of equilibrium that a man requires when he jumps out of a moving train and runs for some yards along the platform, if he is to avoid falling. He runs for a moment because the environment that he has just left was one animated by great velocity, and utterly unlike the inert soil upon which his feet find it difficult to keep their balance.

Because the dream world is not the waking world, it does not follow that the waking world is less genuine, far from it. In the world of sleep, our perceptions are so overcharged, each of them increased by a counterpart which doubles its bulk and blinds it to no purpose, that we are not able even to distinguish what is happening in the bewilderment of awakening; was it Françoise that had come to me, or I that, tired of waiting, went to her? Silence at that moment was the only way not to reveal anything, as at the moment when we are brought before a magistrate cognisant of all the charges against us, when we have not been informed of them ourself. Was it Françoise that had come, was it I that had summoned her? Was it not, indeed, Françoise that had been asleep and I that had just awoken her; nay more, was not Françoise enclosed in my breast, for the distinction between persons and their reaction upon one another barely exists in that murky obscurity in which reality is as little translucent as in the body of a porcupine, and our all but non-existent perception may perhaps furnish an idea of the perception of certain animals. Besides, in the limpid state of unreason that precedes these heavy slumbers, if fragments of wisdom float there luminously, if the names of Taine and George Eliot are not unknown, the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

waking life does still retain the superiority, inasmuch as it is possible to continue it every morning, whereas it is not possible to continue the dream life every night. But are there perhaps other worlds more real than the waking world? Even it we have seen transformed by every revolution in the arts, and still more, at the same time, by the degree of proficiency and culture that distinguishes an artist from an ignorant fool.

And often an extra hour of sleep is a paralytic stroke after which we must recover the use of our limbs, learn to speak. Our will would not be adequate for this task. We have slept too long, we no longer exist. Our waking is barely felt, mechanically and without consciousness, as a water pipe might feel the turning off of a tap. A life more inanimate than that of the jellyfish follows, in which we could equally well believe that we had been drawn up from the depths of the sea or released from prison, were we but capable of thinking anything at all. But then from the highest heaven the goddess Mnemotechnia bends down and holds out to us in the formula "the habit of ringing for our coffee" the hope of resurrection. However, the instantaneous gift of memory is not always so simple. Often we have before us, in those first minutes in which we allow ourself to slip into the waking state, a truth composed of different realities among which we imagine that we can choose, as among a pack of cards.

It is Friday morning and we have just returned from our walk, or else it is teatime by the sea. The idea of sleep and that we are lying in bed and in our nightshirt is often the last that occurs to us.

Our resurrection is not effected at once; we think that we have rung the bell, we have not done so, we

THE CAPTIVE

utter senseless remarks. Movement alone restores our thought, and when we have actually pressed the electric button we are able to say slowly but distinctly: "It must be at least ten o'clock, Françoise, bring me my coffee." Oh, the miracle! Françoise could have had no suspicion of the sea of unreality in which I was still wholly immersed and through which I had had the energy to make my strange question pass. Her answer was: "It is ten past ten." Which made my remark appear quite reasonable, and enabled me not to let her perceive the fantastic conversations by which I had been interminably beguiled, on days when it was not a mountain of non-existence that had crushed all life out of me. By strength of will, I had reinstated myself in life. I was still enjoying the last shreds of sleep, that is to say of the only inventiveness, the only novelty that exists in story-telling, since none of our narrations in the waking state, even though they be adorned with literary graces, admit those mysterious differences from which beauty derives. It is easy to speak of the beauty created by opium. But to a man who is accustomed to sleeping only with the aid of drugs, an unexpected hour of natural sleep will reveal the vast, matutinal expanse of a country as mysterious and more refreshing. By varying the hour, the place at which we go to sleep, by wooing sleep in an artificial manner, or on the contrary by returning for once to natural sleep—the strangest kind of all to whoever is in the habit of putting himself to sleep with soporifics—we succeed in producing a thousand times as many varieties of sleep as a gardener could produce of carnations or roses. Gardeners produce flowers that are delicious dreams, and others too that are like nightmares. When I fell asleep in a

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

certain way I used to wake up shivering, thinking that I had caught the measles, or, what was far more painful, that my grandmother (to whom I never gave a thought now) was hurt because I had laughed at her that day when, at Balbec, in the belief that she was about to die, she had wished me to have a photograph of herself. At once, albeit I was awake, I felt that I must go and explain to her that she had misunderstood me. But, already, my bodily warmth was returning. The diagnosis of measles was set aside, and my grandmother became so remote that she no longer made my heart throb. Sometimes over these different kinds of sleep there fell a sudden darkness. I was afraid to continue my walk along an entirely unlighted avenue, where I could hear prowling footsteps. Suddenly a dispute broke out between a policeman and one of those women whom one often saw driving hackney carriages, and mistook at a distance for young men. Upon her box among the shadows I could not see her, but she spoke, and in her voice I could read the perfections of her face and the youthfulness of her body. I strode towards her, in the darkness, to get into her carriage before she drove off. It was a long way. Fortunately, her dispute with the policeman continued. I overtook the carriage which was still drawn up. This part of the avenue was lighted by street lamps. The driver became visible. She was indeed a woman, but old and corpulent, with white hair tumbling beneath her hat, and a red birthmark on her face. I walked past her, thinking: Is this what happens to the youth of women? Those whom we have met in the past, if suddenly we desire to see them again, have they become old? Is the young woman whom we desire like a character on the

THE CAPTIVE

stage, when, unable to secure the actress who created the part, the management is obliged to entrust it to a new star? But then it is no longer the same.

With this a feeling of melancholy invaded me. We have thus in our sleep a number of Pities, like the "Pietà" of the Renaissance, but not, like them, wrought in marble, being, rather, unsubstantial. They have their purpose, however, which is to make us remember a certain outlook upon things, more tender, more human, which we are too apt to forget in the common sense, frigid, sometimes full of hostility, of the waking state. Thus I was reminded of the vow that I had made at Balbec that I would always treat Françoise with compassion. And for the whole of that morning at least I would manage to compel myself not to be irritated by Françoise's quarrels with the butler, to be gentle with Françoise to whom the others shewed so little kindness. For that morning only, and I would have to try to frame a code that was a little more permanent; for, just as nations are not governed for any length of time by a policy of pure sentiment, so men are not governed by the memory of their dreams. Already this dream was beginning to fade away. In attempting to recall it in order to portray it I made it fade all the faster. My eyelids were no longer so firmly sealed over my eyes. If I tried to reconstruct my dream, they opened completely. At every moment we must choose between health and sanity on the one hand, and spiritual pleasures on the other. I have always taken the cowardly part of choosing the former. Moreover, the perilous power that I was renouncing was even more perilous than we suppose. Pities, dreams, do not fly away unac-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

accompanied. When we alter thus the conditions in which we go to sleep, it is not our dreams alone that fade, but, for days on end, for years it may be, the faculty not merely of dreaming but of going to sleep. Sleep is divine but by no means stable; the slightest shock makes it volatile. A lover of habits, they retain it every night, being more fixed than itself, in the place set apart for it, they preserve it from all injury, but if we displace it, if it is no longer subordinated, it melts away like a vapour. It is like youth and love, never to be recaptured.

In these various forms of sleep, as likewise in music, it was the lengthening or shortening of the interval that created beauty. I enjoyed this beauty, but, on the other hand, I had lost in my sleep, however brief, a good number of the cries which render perceptible to us the peripatetic life of the tradesmen, the victuallers of Paris. And so, as a habit (without, alas, foreseeing the drama in which these late awakenings and the Draconian, Medo-Persian laws of a Racinian Assuérus were presently to involve me) I made an effort to awaken early so as to lose none of these cries.

And, more than the pleasure of knowing how fond Albertine was of them and of being out of doors myself without leaving my bed, I heard in them as it were the symbol of the atmosphere of the world outside, of the dangerous stirring life through the veins of which I did not allow her to move save under my tutelage, from which I withdrew her at the hour of my choosing to make her return home to my side. And so it was with the most perfect sincerity that I was able to say in answer to Albertine: "On the contrary, they give me pleasure because I know that you like them." "A la barque, les huitres,

THE CAPTIVE

à la barque." "Oh, oysters! I've been simply longing for some!" Fortunately Albertine, partly from inconsistency, partly from docility, quickly forgot the things for which she had been longing, and before I had time to tell her that she would find better oysters at Prunier's, she wanted in succession all the things that she heard cried by the fish hawker: "A la crevette, à la bonne crevette, j'ai de la raie toute en vie, toute en vie." "Merlans à frire, à frire." "Il arrive le maquereau, maquereau frais, maquereau nouveau." "Voilà le maquereau, mesdames, il est beau le maquereau." "A la moule fraîche et bonne, à la moule!" In spite of myself, the warning: "Il arrive le maquereau" made me shudder. But as this warning could not, I felt, apply to our chauffeur, I thought only of the fish of that name, which I detested, and my uneasiness did not last. "Ah! Mussels," said Albertine, "I should so like some mussels." "My darling! They were all very well at Balbec, here they're not worth eating; besides, I implore you, remember what Cottard told you about mussels." But my remark was all the more ill-chosen in that the vegetable woman who came next announced a thing that Cottard had forbidden even more strictly:

A la romaine, à la romaine!
On ne le vend pas, on la promène.

Albertine consented, however, to sacrifice her lettuces, on the condition that I would promise to buy for her in a few days' time from the woman who cried: "J'ai de la belle asperge d'Argenteuil, j'ai de la belle asperge." A mysterious voice, from which one would have expected some stranger utterance, insinuated: "Tonneaux, ton-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

neaux!" We were obliged to remain under the disappointment that nothing more was being offered us than barrels, for the word was almost entirely drowned by the appeal: "Vitri, vitri-er, carreaux cassés, voilà le vitrier, vitri-er," a Gregorian division which reminded me less, however, of the liturgy than did the appeal of the rag vendor, reproducing unconsciously one of those abrupt interruptions of sound, in the middle of a prayer, which are common enough in the ritual of the church: "Praeceptis salutaribus moniti et divina institutione formati audemus dicere," says the priest, ending sharply upon "dicere." Without irreverence, as the populace of the middle ages used to perform plays and farces within the consecrated ground of the church, it is of that "dicere" that this rag vendor makes one think when, after drawling the other words, he utters the final syllable with a sharpness befitting the accentuation laid down by the great Pope of the seventh century: "Chiffons, ferrailles à vendre" (all this chanted slowly, as are the two syllables that follow, whereas the last concludes more briskly than "dicere") "peaux d'la-pins." "La Valence, la belle Valence, la fraîche orange." The humble leeks even: "Voilà d'beaux poireaux," the onions: "Huit sous mon oignon," sounded for me as it were an echo of the rolling waves in which, left to herself, Albertine might have perished, and thus assumed the sweetness of a "Suave mari magno." "Voilà des carottes à deux ronds la botte." "Oh!" exclaimed Albertine, "cabbages, carrots, oranges. All the things I want to eat. Do make Françoise go out and buy some. She shall cook us a dish of creamed carrots. Besides, it will be so nice to eat all these things together. It will be all the sounds that we hear, trans-

THE CAPTIVE

formed into a good dinner. . . . Oh, please, ask Françoise to give us instead a ray with black butter. It is so good!" "My dear child, of course I will, but don't wait; if you do, you'll be asking for all the things on the vegetable-barrows." "Very well, I'm off, but I never want anything again for our dinners except what we've heard cried in the street. It is such fun. And to think that we shall have to wait two whole months before we hear: 'Haricots verts et tendres, haricots, v'là l'haricot vert.' How true that is: tender haricots; you know I like them as soft as soft, dripping with vinegar sauce, you wouldn't think you were eating, they melt in the mouth like drops of dew. Oh dear, it's the same with the little hearts of cream cheese, such a long time to wait: 'Bon fromage à la cré, à la cré, bon fromage.' And the water-grapes from Fontainebleau: 'J'ai du bon chasselas.'" And I thought with dismay of all the time that I should have to spend with her before the water-grapes were in season. "Listen, I said that I wanted only the things that we had heard cried, but of course I make exceptions. And so it's by no means impossible that I may look in at Rebattet's and order an ice for the two of us. You will tell me that it's not the season for them, but I do so want one!" I was disturbed by this plan of going to Rebattet's, rendered more certain and more suspicious in my eyes by the words "it's by no means impossible." It was the day on which the Verdurins were at home, and, ever since Swann had informed them that Rebattet's was the best place, it was there that they ordered their ices and pastry. "I have no objection to an ice, my darling Albertine, but let me order it for you, I don't know myself whether it will be from Poiré-Blanche's, or

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Rebattet's, or the Ritz, anyhow I shall see." "Then you're going out?" she said with an air of distrust. She always maintained that she would be delighted if I went out more often, but if anything that I said could make her suppose that I would not be staying indoors, her uneasy air made me think that the joy that she would feel in seeing me go out every day was perhaps not altogether sincere. "I may perhaps go out, perhaps not, you know quite well that I never make plans beforehand. In any case ices are not a thing that is cried, that people hawk in the streets, why do you want one?" And then she replied in words which shewed me what a fund of intelligence and latent taste had developed in her since Balbec, in words akin to those which, she pretended, were due entirely to my influence, to living continually in my company, words which, however, I should never have uttered, as though I had been in some way forbidden by some unknown authority ever to decorate my conversation with literary forms. Perhaps the future was not destined to be the same for Albertine as for myself. I had almost a presentiment of this when I saw her eagerness to employ in speech images so "written," which seemed to me to be reserved for another, more sacred use, of which I was still ignorant. She said to me (and I was, in spite of everything, deeply touched, for I thought to myself: Certainly I would not speak as she does, and yet, all the same, but for me she would not be speaking like this, she has come profoundly under my influence, she cannot therefore help loving me, she is my handiwork): "What I like about these foodstuffs that are cried is that a thing which we hear like a rhapsody changes its nature when it comes to our table and addresses itself to

THE CAPTIVE

my palate. As for ices (for I hope that you won't order me one that isn't cast in one of those old-fashioned moulds which have every architectural shape imaginable), whenever I take one, temples, churches, obelisks, rocks, it is like an illustrated geography-book which I look at first of all and then convert its raspberry or vanilla monuments into coolness in my throat." I thought that this was a little too well expressed, but she felt that I thought that it was well expressed, and went on, pausing for a moment when she had brought off her comparison to laugh that beautiful laugh of hers which was so painful to me because it was so voluptuous. "Oh dear, at the Ritz I'm afraid you'll find Vendôme Columns of ice, chocolate ice or raspberry, and then you will need a lot of them so that they may look like votive pillars or pylons erected along an avenue to the glory of Coolness. They make raspberry obelisks too, which will rise up here and there in the burning desert of my thirst, and I shall make their pink granite crumble and melt deep down in my throat which they will refresh better than any oasis" (and here the deep laugh broke out, whether from satisfaction at talking so well, or in derision of herself for using such hackneyed images, or, alas, from a physical pleasure at feeling inside herself something so good, so cool, which was tantamount to a sensual satisfaction). "Those mountains of ice at the Ritz sometimes suggest Monte Rosa, and indeed, if it is a lemon ice, I do not object to its not having a monumental shape, its being irregular, abrupt, like one of Elstir's mountains. It ought not to be too white then, but slightly yellowish, with that look of dull, dirty snow that Elstir's mountains have. The ice need not be at all big, only half an ice if you like,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

those lemon ices are still mountains, reduced to a tiny scale, but our imagination restores their dimensions, like those little Japanese dwarf trees which, one knows quite well, are still cedars, oaks, manchineels; so much so that if I arranged a few of them beside a little trickle of water in my room I should have a vast forest stretching down to a river, in which children would be lost. In the same way, at the foot of my yellowish lemon ice, I can see quite clearly postilions, travellers, post-chaises over which my tongue sets to work to roll down freezing avalanches that will swallow them up" (the cruel delight with which she said this excited my jealousy); "just as," she went on, "I set my lips to work to destroy, pillar after pillar, those Venetian churches of a porphyry that is made with strawberries, and send what I spare of them crashing down upon the worshippers. Yes, all those monuments will pass from their stony state into my inside which throbs already with their melting coolness. But, you know, even without ices, nothing is so exciting or makes one so thirsty as the advertisements of mineral springs. At Montjouvain, at Mlle. Vinteuil's, there was no good confectioner who made ices in the neighbourhood, but we used to make our own tour of France in the garden by drinking a different sparkling water every day, like Vichy water which, as soon as you pour it out, sends up from the bottom of the glass a white cloud which fades and dissolves if you don't drink it at once." But to hear her speak of Montjouvain was too painful, I cut her short. "I am boring you, good-bye, my dear boy." What a change from Balbec, where I would defy Elstir himself to have been able to divine in Albertine this wealth of poetry, a poetry less strange, less personal than that of

THE CAPTIVE

Céleste Albaret, for instance. Albertine would never have thought of the things that Céleste used to say to me, but love, even when it seems to be nearing its end, is partial. I preferred the illustrated geography-book of her ices, the somewhat facile charm of which seemed to me a reason for loving Albertine and a proof that I had an influence over her, that she was in love with me.

As soon as Albertine had gone out, I felt how tiring it was to me, this perpetual presence, insatiable of movement and life, which disturbed my sleep with its movements, made me live in a perpetual chill by that habit of leaving doors open, forced me—in order to find pretexts that would justify me in not accompanying her, without, however, appearing too unwell, and at the same time to see that she was not unaccompanied—to display every day greater ingenuity that Sheherazade. Unfortunately, if by a similar ingenuity the Persian storyteller postponed her own death, I was hastening mine. There are thus in life certain situations which are not all created, as was this, by amorous jealousy and a precarious state of health which does not permit us to share the life of a young and active person, situations in which nevertheless the problem of whether to continue a life shared with that person or to return to the separate existence of the past sets itself almost in medical terms: to which of the two sorts of repose ought we to sacrifice ourself (by continuing the daily strain, or by returning to the agonies of separation) to that of the head or of the heart?

In any event, I was very glad that Andrée was to accompany Albertine to the Trocadéro, for certain recent and for that matter entirely trivial incidents had brought

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

it about that while I had still, of course, the same confidence in the chauffeur's honesty, his vigilance, or at least the perspicacity of his vigilance did not seem to be quite what it had once been. It so happened that, only a short while since, I had sent Albertine alone in his charge to Versailles, and she told me that she had taken her luncheon at the Réservoirs; as the chauffeur had mentioned the restaurant Vatel, the day on which I noticed this contradiction, I found an excuse to go downstairs and speak to him (it was still the same man, whose acquaintance we had made at Balbec) while Albertine was dressing. "You told me that you had had your luncheon at the Vatel, Mlle. Albertine mentions the Réservoirs. What is the meaning of that?" The driver replied: "Oh, I said that I had had my luncheon at the Vatel, but I cannot tell where Mademoiselle took hers. She left me as soon as we reached Versailles to take a horse cab, which she prefers when it is not a question of time." Already I was furious at the thought that she had been alone; still, it was only during the time that she spent at her luncheon. "You might surely," I suggested mildly (for I did not wish to appear to be keeping Albertine actually under surveillance, which would have been humiliating to myself, and doubly so, for it would have shewn that she concealed her activities from me), "have had your luncheon, I do not say at her table, but in the same restaurant?" "But all she told me was to meet her at six o'clock at the Place d'Armes. I had no orders to call for her after luncheon." "Ah!" I said, making an effort to conceal my dismay. And I returned upstairs. And so it was for more than seven hours on end that Albertine had been alone, left to her own devices.

THE CAPTIVE

I might assure myself, it is true, that the cab had not been merely an expedient whereby to escape from the chauffeur's supervision. In town, Albertine preferred driving in a cab, saying that one had a better view, that the air was more pleasant. Nevertheless, she had spent seven hours, as to which I should never know anything. And I dared not think of the manner in which she must have employed them. I felt that the driver had been extremely clumsy, but my confidence in him was now absolute. For if he had been to the slightest extent in league with Albertine, he would never have acknowledged that he had left her unguarded from eleven o'clock in the morning to six in the afternoon. There could be but one other explanation, and it was absurd, of the chauffeur's admission. This was that some quarrel between Albertine and himself had prompted him, by making a minor disclosure to me, to shew my mistress that he was not the sort of man who could be hushed, and that if, after this first gentle warning, she did not do exactly as he told her, he would take the law into his own hands. But this explanation was absurd; I should have had first of all to assume a non-existent quarrel between him and Albertine, and then to label as a consummate blackmailer this good-looking motorist who had always shewn himself so affable and obliging. Only two days later, as it happened, I saw that he was more capable than I had for a moment supposed in my frenzy of suspicion of exercising over Albertine a discreet and far-seeing vigilance. For, having managed to take him aside and talk to him of what he had told me about Versailles, I said to him in a careless, friendly tone: "That drive to Versailles that you told me about the other day was everything that it

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

should be, you behaved perfectly as you always do. But, if I may give you just a little hint, I have so much responsibility now that Mme. Bontemps has placed her niece under my charge, I am so afraid of accidents, I reproach myself so for not going with her, that I prefer that it should be yourself, you who are so safe, so wonderfully skilful, to whom no accident can ever happen, that shall take Mlle. Albertine everywhere. Then I need fear nothing." The charming apostolic motorist smiled a subtle smile, his hand resting upon the consecration-cross of his wheel. Then he uttered these words which (banishing all the anxiety from my heart where its place was at once filled by joy) made me want to fling my arms round his neck: "Don't be afraid," he said to me. "Nothing can happen to her, for, when my wheel is not guiding her, my eye follows her everywhere. At Versailles, I went quietly along and visited the town with her, as you might say. From the Réservoirs she went to the Château, from the Château to the Trianons, and I following her all the time without appearing to see her, and the astonishing thing is that she never saw me. Oh, if she had seen me, the fat would have been in the fire. It was only natural, as I had the whole day before me with nothing to do that I should visit the castle too. All the more as Mademoiselle certainly hasn't failed to notice that I've read a bit myself and take an interest in all those old curiosities" (this was true, indeed I should have been surprised if I had learned that he was a friend of Morel, so far more refined was his taste than the violinist's). "Anyhow, she didn't see me." "She must have met some of her own friends, of course, for she knows a great many ladies at Versailles." "No, she was

THE CAPTIVE

alone all the time." "Then people must have stared at her, a girl of such striking appearance, all by herself." "Why, of course they stared at her, but she knew nothing about it; she went all the time with her eyes glued to her guide-book, or gazing up at the pictures." The chauffeur's story seemed to me all the more accurate in that it was indeed a "card" with a picture of the Château, and another of the Trianons, that Albertine had sent me on the day of her visit. The care with which the obliging chauffeur had followed every step of her course touched me deeply. How was I to suppose that this correction—in the form of a generous amplification—of his account given two days earlier was due to the fact that in those two days Albertine, alarmed that the chauffeur should have spoken to me, had surrendered, and made her peace with him. This suspicion never even occurred to me. It is beyond question that this version of the driver's story, as it rid me of all fear that Albertine might have deceived me, quite naturally cooled me towards my mistress and made me take less interest in the day that she had spent at Versailles. I think, however, that the chauffeur's explanations, which, by absolving Albertine, made her even more tedious than before, would not perhaps have been sufficient to calm me so quickly. Two little pimples which for some days past my mistress had had upon her brow were perhaps even more effective in modifying the sentiments of my heart. Finally these were diverted farther still from her (so far that I was conscious of her existence only when I set eyes upon her) by the strange confidence volunteered me by Gilberte's maid, whom I happened to meet. I learned that, when I used to go every day to see Gilberte, she was in love

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

with a young man of whom she saw a great deal more than of myself. I had had an inkling of this for a moment at the time, indeed I had questioned this very maid. But, as she knew that I was in love with Gilberte, she had denied, sworn that never had Mlle. Swann set eyes on the young man. Now, however, knowing that my love had long since died, that for years past I had left all her letters unanswered—and also perhaps because she was no longer in Gilberte's service—of her own accord she gave me a full account of the amorous episode of which I had known nothing. This seemed to her quite natural. I supposed, remembering her oaths at the time, that she had not been aware of what was going on. Far from it, it was she herself who used to go, at Mme. Swann's orders, to inform the young man whenever the object of my love was alone. The object then of my love. . . . But I asked myself whether my love of those days was as dead as I thought, for this story pained me. As I do not believe that jealousy can revive a dead love, I supposed that my painful impression was due, in part at least, to the injury to my self-esteem, for a number of people whom I did not like and who at that time and even a little later—their attitude has since altered—affected a contemptuous attitude towards myself, knew perfectly well, while I was in love with Gilberte, that I was her dupe. And this made me ask myself retrospectively whether in my love for Gilberte there had not been an element of self-love, since it so pained me now to discover that all the hours of affectionate intercourse, which had made me so happy, were known to be nothing more than a deliberate hoodwinking of me by my mistress, by people whom I did not like. In any case, love or self-

THE CAPTIVE

love, Gilberte was almost dead in me but not entirely, and the result of this annoyance was to prevent me from worrying myself beyond measure about Albertine, who occupied so small a place in my heart. Nevertheless, to return to her (after so long a parenthesis) and to her expedition to Versailles, the postcards of Versailles (is it possible, then, to have one's heart caught in a noose like this by two simultaneous and interwoven jealousies, each inspired by a different person?) gave me a slightly disagreeable impression whenever, as I tidied my papers, my eye fell upon them. And I thought that if the driver had not been such a worthy fellow, the harmony of his second narrative with Albertine's "cards" would not have amounted to much, for what are the first things that people send you from Versailles but the Château and the Trianons, unless that is to say the card has been chosen by some person of refined taste who adores a certain statue, or by some idiot who selects as a "view" of Versailles the station of the horse tramway or the goods depot. Even then I am wrong in saying an idiot, such postcards not having always been bought by a person of that sort at random, for their interest as coming from Versailles. For two whole years men of intelligence, artists, used to find Siena, Venice, Granada a "bore," and would say of the humblest omnibus, of every railway-carriage: "There you have true beauty." Then this fancy passed like the rest. Indeed, I cannot be certain that people did not revert to the "sacrilege of destroying the noble relics of the past." Anyhow, a first class railway carriage ceased to be regarded as *a priori* more beautiful than St. Mark's at Venice. People continued to say: "Here you have real life, the return to the past

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

is artificial," but without drawing any definite conclusion. To make quite certain, without forfeiting any of my confidence in the chauffeur, in order that Albertine might not be able to send him away without his venturing to refuse for fear of her taking him for a spy, I never allowed her to go out after this without the reinforcement of Andrée, whereas for some time past I had found the chauffeur sufficient. I had even allowed her then (a thing I would never dare do now) to stay away for three whole days by herself with the chauffeur and to go almost as far as Balbec, so great was her longing to travel at high speed in an open car. Three days during which my mind had been quite at rest, although the rain of postcards that she had showered upon me did not reach me, owing to the appalling state of the Breton postal system (good in summer, but disorganised, no doubt, in winter), until a week after the return of Albertine and the chauffeur, in such health and vigour that on the very morning of their return they resumed, as though nothing had happened, their daily outings. I was delighted that Albertine should be going this afternoon to the Trocadéro, to this "special" *matinée*, but still more reassured that she would have a companion there in the shape of Andrée.

Dismissing these reflexions, now that Albertine had gone out, I went and took my stand for a moment at the window. There was at first a silence, amid which the whistle of the tripe vendor and the horn of the tramcar made the air ring in different octaves, like a blind piano-tuner. Then gradually the interwoven motives became distinct, and others were combined with them. There was also a new whistle, the call of a vendor the nature of whose wares I have never discovered, a whistle that was

THE CAPTIVE

itself exactly like the scream of the tramway, and, as it was not carried out of earshot by its own velocity, one thought of a single car, not endowed with motion, or broken down, immobilised, screaming at short intervals like a dying animal. And I felt that, should I ever have to leave this aristocratic quarter—unless it were to move to one that was entirely plebeian—the streets and boulevards of central Paris (where the fruit, fish and other trades, stabilised in huge stores, rendered superfluous the cries of the street hawkers, who for that matter would not have been able to make themselves heard) would seem to me very dreary, quite uninhabitable, stripped, drained of all these litanies of the small trades and peripatetic victuals, deprived of the orchestra that returned every morning to charm me. On the pavement a woman with no pretence to fashion (or else obedient to an ugly fashion) came past, too brightly dressed in a sack overcoat of goatskin; but no, it was not a woman, it was a chauffeur who, enveloped in his ponyskin, was proceeding on foot to his garage. Escaped from the big hotels, their winged messengers, of variegated hue, were speeding towards the termini, bent over their handlebars, to meet the arrivals by the morning trains. The throb of a violin was due at one time to the passing of a motor-car, at another to my not having put enough water in my electric kettle. In the middle of the symphony there rang out an old-fashioned “air”; replacing the sweet seller, who generally accompanied her song with a rattle, the toy seller, to whose pipe was attached a jumping jack which he sent flying in all directions, paraded similar puppets for sale, and without heeding the ritual declamation of Gregory the Great, the reformed declamation of Pales-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

trina or the lyrical declamation of the modern composers, intoned at the top of his voice, a belated adherent of pure melody: "Allons les papas, allons les mamans, contentez vos petits enfants, c'est moi qui les fais, c'est moi qui les vends, et c'est moi qui boulotte l'argent. Tra la la la. Tra la la la laire, tra la la la la la la. Allons les petits!" Some Italian boys in felt *bérets* made no attempt to compete with this lively aria, and it was without a word that they offered their little statuettes. Soon, however, a young *fifer* compelled the toy merchant to move on and to chant more inaudibly, though in brisk time: "Allons les papas, allons les mamans." This young *fifer*, was he one of the dragoons whom I used to hear in the mornings at Doncières? No, for what followed was: "Voilà le réparateur de faïence et de porcelaine. Je répare le verre, le marbre, le cristal, l'os, l'ivoire et objets d'antiquité. Voilà le réparateur." In a butcher's shop, between an aureole of sunshine on the left and a whole ox suspended from a hook on the right, an assistant, very tall and slender, with fair hair and a throat that escaped above his sky-blue collar, was displaying a lightning speed and a religious conscientiousness in putting on one side the most exquisite fillets of beef, on the other the coarsest parts of the rump, placed them upon glittering scales surmounted by a cross, from which hung down a number of beautiful chains, and—albeit he did nothing afterwards but arrange in the window a display of kidneys, steaks, ribs—was really far more suggestive of a handsome angel who, on the day of the Last Judgment, will prepare for God, according to their quality, the separation of the good and the evil and the weighing of souls. And once again the thin crawling music of the fife

THE CAPTIVE

rose in the air, herald no longer of the destruction that Françoise used to dread whenever a regiment of cavalry filed past, but of "repairs" promised by an "antiquary," simpleton or rogue, who, in either case highly eclectic, instead of specialising, applied his art to the most diverse materials. The young bread carriers hastened to stuff into their baskets the long rolls ordered for some luncheon party, while the milk girls attached the bottles of milk to their yokes. The sense of longing with which my eyes followed these young damsels, ought I to consider it quite justified? Would it not have been different if I had been able to detain for a few moments at close quarters one of those whom from the height of my window I saw only inside her shop or in motion. To estimate the loss that I suffered by my seclusion, that is to say the wealth that the day held in store for me, I should have had to intercept in the long unrolling of the animated frieze some girl carrying her linen or her milk, make her pass for a moment, like a silhouette from some mobile scheme of decoration, from the wings to the stage, within the proscenium of my bedroom door, and keep her there under my eye, not without eliciting some information about her which would enable me to find her again some day, like the inscribed ring which ornithologists or ichthyologists attach before setting them free to the legs or bellies of the birds or fishes whose migrations they are anxious to trace.

And so I asked Françoise, since I had a message that I wished taken, to be good enough to send up to my room, should any of them call, one or other of those girls who were always coming to take away the dirty or bring back the clean linen, or with bread, or bottles of milk, and whom she herself used often to send on errands. In do-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

ing so I was like Elstir, who, obliged to remain closeted in his studio, on certain days in spring when the knowledge that the woods were full of violets gave him a hunger to gaze at them, used to send his porter's wife out to buy him a bunch; then it was not the table upon which he had posed the little vegetable model, but the whole carpet of the underwoods where he had seen in other years, in their thousands, the serpentine stems, bowed beneath the weight of their blue beaks, that Elstir would fancy that he had before his eyes, like an imaginary zone defined in his studio by the limpid odour of the sweet, familiar flower.

Of a laundry girl, on a Sunday, there was not the slightest prospect. As for the girl who brought the bread, as ill luck would have it, she had rung the bell when Françoise was not about, had left her rolls in their basket on the landing, and had made off. The fruit girl would not call until much later. Once I had gone to order a cheese at the dairy, and, among the various young assistants, had remarked one girl, extravagantly fair, tall in stature though still little more than a child, who, among the other errand girls, seemed to be dreaming, in a distinctly haughty attitude. I had seen her in the distance only, and for so brief an instant that I could not have described her appearance, except to say that she must have grown too fast and that her head supported a fleece that gave the impression far less of capillary details than of a sculptor's conventional rendering of the separate channels of parallel drifts of snow upon a glacier. This was all that I had been able to make out, apart from a nose sharply outlined (a rare thing in a child) upon a thin face which recalled the beaks of baby vultures.

THE CAPTIVE

Besides, this clustering of her comrades round about her had not been the only thing that prevented me from seeing her distinctly, there was also my uncertainty whether the sentiments which I might, at first sight and subsequently, inspire in her would be those of injured pride, or of irony, or of a scorn which she would express later on to her friends. These alternative suppositions which I had formed, in an instant, with regard to her, had condensed round about her the troubled atmosphere in which she disappeared, like a goddess in the cloud that is shaken by thunder. For moral uncertainty is a greater obstacle to an exact visual perception than any defect of vision would be. In this too skinny young person, who moreover attracted undue attention, the excess of what another person would perhaps have called her charms was precisely what was calculated to repel me, but had nevertheless had the effect of preventing me from perceiving even, far more from remembering anything about the other young dairymaids, whom the hooked nose of this one and her gaze—how unattractive it was!—pensive, personal, with an air of passing judgment, had plunged in perpetual night, as a white streak of lightning darkens the landscape on either side of it. And so, of my call to order a cheese, at the dairy, I had remembered (if we can say “remember” in speaking of a face so carelessly observed that we adapt to the nullity of the face ten different noses in succession), I had remembered only this girl who had not attracted me. This is sufficient to engender love. And yet I should have forgotten the extravagantly fair girl and should never have wished to see her again, had not Françoise told me that, child as she was, she had all her wits about her and would shortly

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

be leaving her employer, since she had been going too fast and owed money among the neighbours. It has been said that beauty is a promise of happiness. Inversely, the possibility of pleasure may be a beginning of beauty.

I began to read Mamma's letter. Beneath her quotations from Madame de Sévigné: "If my thoughts are not entirely black at Combray, they are at least dark grey, I think of you at every moment; I long for you; your health, your affairs, your absence, what sort of cloud do you suppose they make in my sky?" I felt that my mother was vexed to find Albertine's stay in the house prolonged, and my intention of marriage, although not yet announced to my mistress, confirmed. She did not express her annoyance more directly because she was afraid that I might leave her letters lying about. Even then, veiled as her letters were, she reproached me with not informing her immediately, after each of them, that I had received it: "You remember how Mme. de Sévigné said: 'When we are far apart, we no longer laugh at letters which begin with *I have received yours.*'" Without referring to what distressed her most, she said that she was annoyed by my lavish expenditure: "Where on earth does all your money go? It is distressing enough that, like Charles de Sévigné, you do not know what you want and are 'two or three people at once,' but do try at least not to be like him in spending money so that I may never have to say of you: 'he has discovered how to spend and have nothing to shew, how to lose without staking and how to pay without clearing himself of debt.'" I had just finished Mamma's letter when Françoise returned to tell me that she had in the house that very same slightly overbold young dairymaid of whom

THE CAPTIVE

she had spoken to me. "She can quite well take Monsieur's note and bring back the answer, if it's not too far. Monsieur shall see her, she's just like a Little Red Ridinghood." Françoise withdrew to fetch the girl, and I could hear her leading the way and saying: "Come along now, you're frightened because there's a passage, stuff and nonsense, I never thought you would be such a goose. Have I got to lead you by the hand?" And Françoise, like a good and honest servant who means to see that her master is respected as she respects him herself, had draped herself in that majesty which ennobles the matchmaker in a picture by an old master where, in comparison with her, the lover and his mistress fade into insignificance. But Elstir when he gazed at them had no need to bother about what the violets were doing. The entry of the young dairymaid at once robbed me of my contemplative calm; I could think only of how to give plausibility to the fable of the letter that she was to deliver and I began to write quickly without venturing to cast more than a furtive glance at her, so that I might not seem to have brought her into my room to be scrutinised. She was invested for me with that charm of the unknown which I should not discover in a pretty girl whom I had found in one of those houses where they come to meet one. She was neither naked nor in disguise, but a genuine dairymaid, one of those whom we imagine to be so pretty, when we have not time to approach them; she possessed something of what constitutes the eternal desire, the eternal regret of life, the twofold current of which is at length diverted, directed towards us. Twofold, for if it is a question of the unknown, of a person who must, we guess, be divine, from her stature, her

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

proportions, her indifferent glance, her haughty calm, on the other hand we wish this woman to be thoroughly specialised in her profession, allowing us to escape from ourself into that world which a peculiar costume makes us romantically believe different. If for that matter we seek to comprise in a formula the law of our amorous curiosities, we should have to seek it in the maximum of difference between a woman of whom we have caught sight and one whom we have approached and caressed. If the women of what used at one time to be called the closed houses, if prostitutes themselves (provided that we know them to be prostitutes) attract us so little, it is not because they are less beautiful than other women, it is because they are ready and waiting; the very object that we are seeking to attain they offer us already; it is because they are not conquests. The difference there is at a minimum. A harlot smiles at us already in the street as she will smile when she is in our room. We are sculptors. We are anxious to obtain of a woman a statue entirely different from that which she has presented to us. We have seen a girl strolling, indifferent, insolent, along the seashore, we have seen a shop-assistant, serious and active, behind her counter, who will answer us stiffly, if only so as to escape the sarcasm of her comrades, a fruit seller who barely answers us at all. Well, we know no rest until we can discover by experiment whether the proud girl on the seashore, the shop-assistant on her high horse of "What will people say?", the pre-occupied fruit seller cannot be made, by skilful handling on our part, to relax their rectangular attitude, to throw about our neck their fruit-laden arms, to direct towards our lips, with a smile of consent, eyes hitherto frozen or

THE CAPTIVE

absent—oh, the beauty of stern eyes—in working hours when the worker was so afraid of the gossip of her companions, eyes that avoided our beleaguering stare and, now that we have seen her alone and face to face, make their pupils yield beneath the sunlit burden of laughter when we speak of making love. Between the shopgirl, the laundress busy with her iron, the fruit seller, the dairymaid on the one hand, and the same girl when she is about to become our mistress, the maximum of difference is attained, stretched indeed to its extreme limits, and varied by those habitual gestures of her profession which make a pair of arms, during the hours of toil, something as different as possible (regarded as an arabesque pattern) from those supple bonds that already every evening are fastened about our throat while the mouth shapes itself for a kiss. And so we pass our whole life in uneasy advances, incessantly renewed, to respectable girls whom their calling seems to separate from us. Once they are in our arms, they are no longer anything more than they originally were, the gulf that we dreamed of crossing has been bridged. But we begin afresh with other women, we devote to these enterprises all our time, all our money, all our strength, our blood boils at the too cautious driver who is perhaps going to make us miss our first assignation, we work ourself into a fever. That first meeting, we know all the same that it will mean the vanishing of an illusion. It does not so much matter that the illusion still persists; we wish to see whether we can convert it into reality, and then we think of the laundress whose coldness we remarked. Amorous curiosity is like that which is aroused in us by

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the names of places; perpetually disappointed, it revives and remains for ever insatiable.

Alas! As soon as she stood before me, the fair dairymaid with the ribbed tresses, stripped of all that I had imagined and of the desire that had been aroused in me, was reduced to her own proportions. The throbbing cloud of my suppositions no longer enveloped her in a shimmering haze. She acquired an almost beggarly air from having (in place of the ten, the score that I recalled in turn without being able to fix any of them in my memory) but a single nose, rounder than I had thought, which made her appear rather a fool and had in any case lost the faculty of multiplying itself. This flyaway caught on the wing, inert, crushed, incapable of adding anything to its own paltry appearance, had no longer my imagination to collaborate with it. Fallen into the inertia of reality, I sought to rebound; her cheeks, which I had not seen in the shop, appeared to me so pretty that I became alarmed, and, to put myself in countenance, said to the young dairymaid: "Would you be so kind as to pass me the *Figaro* which is lying there, I must make sure of the address to which I am going to send you." Thereupon, as she picked up the newspaper, she disclosed as far as her elbow the red sleeve of her jersey and handed me the conservative sheet with a neat and courteous gesture which pleased me by its intimate rapidity, its pliable contour and its scarlet hue. While I was opening the *Figaro*, in order to say something and without raising my eyes, I asked the girl: "What do you call that red knitted thing you're wearing? It is very becoming." She replied: "It's my golf." For, by a slight downward tendency common to all fashions, the garments and styles

THE CAPTIVE

which, a few years earlier, seemed to belong to the relatively smart world of Albertine's friends, were now the portion of working girls. "Are you quite sure it won't be giving you too much trouble," I said, while I pretended to be searching the columns of the *Figaro*, "if I send you rather a long way?" As soon as I myself appeared to find the service at all arduous that she would be performing by taking a message for me, she began to feel that it would be a trouble to her, "The only thing is, I have to be going out presently on my bike. Good lord, you know, Sunday's the only day we've got." "But won't you catch cold, going bare-headed like that?" "Oh, I shan't be bare-headed, I shall have my polo, and I could get on without it with all the hair I have." I raised my eyes to the blaze of curling tresses and felt myself caught in their swirl and swept away, with a throbbing heart, amid the lightning and the blasts of a hurricane of beauty. I continued to study the newspaper, but albeit this was only to keep myself in countenance and to gain time, while I merely pretended to read, I took in nevertheless the meaning of the words that were before my eyes, and my attention was caught by the following: "To the programme already announced for this afternoon in the great hall of the Trocadéro must be added the name of Mlle. Léa who has consented to appear in *Les Fourberies de Nérine*. She will of course sustain the part of Nérine, in which she is astounding in her display of spirit and bewitching gaiety." It was as though a hand had brutally torn from my heart the bandage beneath which its wound had begun since my return from Balbec to heal. The flood of my anguish escaped in torrents, Léa, that was the actress friend of

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the two girls at Balbec whom Albertine, without appearing to see them, had, one afternoon at the Casino, watched in the mirror. It was true that at Balbec Albertine, at the name of Léa, had adopted a special tone of compunction in order to say to me, almost shocked that anyone could suspect such a pattern of virtue: "Oh no, she is not in the least that sort of woman, she is a very respectable person." Unfortunately for me, when Albertine made a statement of this sort, it was never anything but the first stage towards other, divergent statements. Shortly after the first, came this second: "I don't know her." In the third phase, after Albertine had spoken to me of somebody who was "above suspicion" and whom (in the second place) she did not know, she first of all forgot that she had said that she did not know her and then, in a speech in which she contradicted herself unawares, informed me that she did know her. This first act of oblivion completed, and the fresh statement made, a second oblivion began, to wit that the person was above suspicion. "Isn't so and so," I would ask, "one of those women?" "Why, of course, everybody knows that!" Immediately the note of compunction was sounded afresh to utter a statement which was a vague echo, greatly reduced, of the first statement of all. "I'm bound to say that she has always behaved perfectly properly with me. Of course, she knows that I would send her about her business if she tried it on. Still, that makes no difference. I am obliged to give her credit for the genuine respect she has always shewn for me. It is easy to see she knew the sort of person she had to deal with." We remember the truth because it has a name, is rooted in the past, but a makeshift lie is quickly forgotten. Al-

THE CAPTIVE

bertine forgot this latest lie, her fourth, and, one day when she was anxious to gain my confidence by confiding in me, went so far as to tell me, with regard to the same person who at the outset had been so respectable and whom she did not know: "She took quite a fancy to me at one time. She asked me, three or four times, to go home with her and to come upstairs to her room. I saw no harm in going home with her, where everybody could see us, in broad daylight, in the open air. But when we reached her front door I always made some excuse and I never went upstairs." Shortly after this, Albertine made an illusion to the beautiful things that this lady had in her room. By proceeding from one approximation to another, I should no doubt have arrived at making her tell me the truth which was perhaps less serious than I had been led to believe, for, although perhaps easy going with women, she preferred a male lover, and now that she had myself would not have given a thought to Léa. In any case, with regard to this person, I was still at the first stage of revelation and was not aware whether Albertine knew her. Already, in the case of many women at any rate, it would have been enough for me to collect and present to my mistress, in a synthesis, her contradictory statements, in order to convict her of her misdeeds (misdeeds which, like astronomical laws, it is a great deal easier to deduce by a process of reasoning than to observe, to surprise in the act). But then she would have preferred to say that one of her statements had been a lie, the withdrawal of which would thus bring about the collapse of my whole system of evidence, rather than admit that everything which she had told me from the start was simply a tissue of falsehood. There are similar

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

tissues in the Thousand and One Nights, which we find charming. They pain us, coming from a person whom we love, and thereby enable us to penetrate a little deeper in our knowledge of human nature instead of being content to play upon the surface. Grief penetrates into us and forces us out of painful curiosity to penetrate other people. Whence emerge truths which we feel that we have no right to keep hidden, so much so that a dying atheist who has discovered them, certain of his own extinction, indifferent to fame, will nevertheless devote his last hours on earth to an attempt to make them known.

Of course, I was still at the first stage of enlightenment with regard to Léa. I was not even aware whether Albertine knew her. No matter, it all came to the same thing. I must at all costs prevent her from—at the Trocadéro—renewing this acquaintance or making the acquaintance of this stranger. I have said that I did not know whether she knew Léa; I ought, however, to have learned it at Balbec, from Albertine herself. For defective memory obliterated from my mind as well as from Albertine's a great many of the statements that she had made to me. Memory, instead of being a duplicate always present before our eyes of the various events of our life, is rather an abyss from which at odd moments a chance resemblance enables us to draw up, restored to life, dead impressions; but even then there are innumerable little details which have not fallen into that potential reservoir of memory, and which will remain for ever beyond our control. To anything that we do not know to be related to the real life of the person whom we love we pay but scant attention, we forget immediately what she has said to us about some incident or people that we do

THE CAPTIVE

not know, and her expression while she was saying it. And so when, in due course, our jealousy is aroused by these same people, and seeks to make sure that it is not mistaken, that it is they who are responsible for the haste which our mistress shews in leaving the house, her annoyance when we have prevented her from going out by returning earlier than usual; our jealousy ransacking the past in search of a clue can find nothing; always retrospective, it is like a historian who has to write the history of a period for which he has no documents; always belated, it dashes like a mad bull to the spot where it will not find the proud and brilliant creature who is infuriating it with his darts and whom the crowd admire for his splendour and his cunning. Jealousy fights the empty air, uncertain as we are in those dreams in which we are distressed because we cannot find in his empty house a person whom we have known well in life, but who here perhaps is really another person and has merely borrowed the features of our friend, uncertain as we are even more after we awake when we seek to identify this or that detail of our dream. What was our mistress's expression when she told us this; did she not look happy, was she not actually whistling, a thing that she never does unless there is some amorous thought in her mind? In the time of our love, if our presence teased her and irritated her a little, has she not told us something that is contradicted by what she now affirms, that she knows or does not know such and such a person? We do not know, we shall never find out; we strain after the unsubstantial fragments of a dream, and all the time our life with our mistress continues, our life indifferent to what we do not know to be important to us, attentive to what is perhaps of no

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

importance, hagridden by people who have no real connexion with us, full of lapses of memory, gaps, vain anxieties, our life as fantastic as a dream.

I realised that the young dairymaid was still in the room. I told her that the place was certainly a long way off, that I did not need her. Whereupon she also decided that it would be too much trouble: "There's a fine match coming off, I don't want to miss it." I felt that she must already be devoted to sport and that in a few years' time she would be talking about "living her own life." I told her that I certainly did not need her any longer, and gave her five francs. Immediately, having little expected this largesse, and telling herself that if she earned five francs for doing nothing she would have a great deal more for taking my message, she began to find that her match was of no importance. "I could easily have taken your message. I can always find time." But I thrust her from the room, I needed to be alone, I must at all costs prevent Albertine from any risk of meeting Léa's girl friends at the Trocadéro. I must try, and I must succeed; to tell the truth I did not yet see how, and during these first moments I opened my hands, gazed at them, cracked my knuckles, whether because the mind which cannot find what it is seeking, in a fit of laziness allows itself to halt for an instant at a spot where the most unimportant things are distinctly visible to it, like the blades of grass on the embankment which we see from the carriage window trembling in the wind, when the train halts in the open country—an immobility that is not always more fertile than that of the captured animal which, paralysed by fear or fascinated, gazes without moving a muscle—or that I might hold my body in readi-

THE CAPTIVE

ness—with my mind at work inside it and, in my mind, the means of action against this or that person—as though it were no more than a weapon from which would be fired the shot that was to separate Albertine from Léa and her two friends. It is true that earlier in the morning, when Françoise had come in to tell me that Albertine was going to the Trocadéro, I had said to myself: “Albertine is at liberty to do as she pleases” and had supposed that until evening came, in this radiant weather, her actions would remain without any perceptible importance to myself; but it was not only the morning sun, as I had thought, that had made me so careless; it was because, having obliged Albertine to abandon the plans that she might perhaps have initiated or even completed at the Verdurins’, and having restricted her to attending a performance which I myself had chosen, so that she could not have made any preparations, I knew that whatever she did would of necessity be innocent. Just as, if Albertine had said a few moments later: “If I kill myself, it’s all the same to me,” it would have been because she was certain that she would not kill herself. Surrounding myself and Albertine there had been this morning (far more than the sunlight in the air) that atmosphere which we do not see, but by the translucent and changing medium of which we do see, I her actions, she the importance of her own life, that is to say those beliefs which we do not perceive but which are no more assimilable to a pure vacuum than is the air that surrounds us; composing round about us a variable atmosphere, sometimes excellent, often unbreathable, they deserve to be studied and recorded as carefully as the temperature, the barometric pressure, the weather, for our days have their

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

own singularity, physical and moral. My belief, which I had failed to remark this morning, and yet in which I had been joyously enveloped until the moment when I had looked a second time at the *Figaro*, that Albertine would do nothing that was not harmless, this belief had vanished. I was living no longer in the fine sunny day, but in a day carved out of the other by my anxiety lest Albertine might renew her acquaintance with Léa and more easily still with the two girls, should they go, as seemed to me probable, to applaud the actress at the Trocadéro where it would not be difficult for them, in one of the intervals, to come upon Albertine. I no longer thought of Mlle. Vinteuil, the name of Léa had brought back to my mind, to make me jealous, the image of Albertine in the Casino watching the two girls. For I possessed in my memory only series of Albertines, separate from one another, incomplete, outlines, snapshots; and so my jealousy was restricted to an intermittent expression, at once fugitive and fixed, and to the people who had caused that expression to appear upon Albertine's face. I remembered her when, at Balbec, she received undue attention from the two girls or from women of that sort; I remembered the distress that I used to feel when I saw her face subjected to an active scrutiny, like that of a painter preparing to make a sketch, entirely covered by them, and, doubtless on account of my presence, submitting to this contact without appearing to notice it, with a passivity that was perhaps clandestinely voluptuous. And before she recovered herself and spoke to me there was an instant during which Albertine did not move, smiled into the empty air, with the same air of feigned spontaneity and concealed pleas-

THE CAPTIVE

ure as if she were posing for somebody to take her photograph; or even seeking to assume before the camera a more dashing pose—that which she had adopted at Doncières when we were walking with Saint-Loup, and, laughing and passing her tongue over her lips, she pretended to be teasing a dog. Certainly at such moments she was not at all the same as when it was she that was interested in little girls who passed us. Then, on the contrary, her narrow velvety gaze fastened itself upon, glued itself to the passer-by, so adherent, so corrosive, that you felt that when she removed it it must tear away the skin. But at that moment this other expression, which did at least give her a serious air, almost as though she were in pain, had seemed to me a pleasant relief after the toneless blissful expression she had worn in the presence of the two girls, and I should have preferred the sombre expression of the desire that she did perhaps feel at times to the laughing expression caused by the desire which she aroused. However she might attempt to conceal her consciousness of it, it bathed her, enveloped her, vaporous, voluptuous, made her whole face appear rosy. But everything that Albertine held at such moments suspended in herself, that radiated round her and hurt me so acutely, how could I tell whether, once my back was turned, she would continue to keep it to herself, whether to the advances of the two girls, now that I was no longer with her, she would not make some audacious response. Indeed, these memories caused me intense grief, they were like a complete admission of Albertine's failings, a general confession of her infidelity against which were powerless the various oaths that she swore to me and I wished to believe, the negative results of my

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

incomplete researches, the assurances, made perhaps in connivance with her, of Andrée. Albertine might deny specified betrayals; by words that she let fall, more emphatic than her declarations to the contrary, by that searching gaze alone, she had made confession of what she would fain have concealed, far more than any specified incident, what she would have let herself be killed sooner than admit: her natural tendency. For there is no one who will willingly deliver up his soul. Notwithstanding the grief that these memories were causing me, could I have denied that it was the programme of the matinée at the Trocadéro that had revived my need of Albertine? She was one of those women in whom their misdeeds may at a pinch take the place of absent charms, and no less than their misdeeds the kindness that follows them and restores to us that sense of comfort which in their company, like an invalid who is never well for two days in succession, we are incessantly obliged to recapture. And then, even more than their misdeeds while we are in love with them, there are their misdeeds before we made their acquaintance, and first and foremost: their nature. What makes this sort of love painful is, in fact, that there preexists a sort of original sin of Woman, a sin which makes us love them, so that, when we forget it, we feel less need of them, and to begin to love afresh we must begin to suffer afresh. At this moment, the thought that she must not meet the two girls again and the question whether or not she knew Léa were what was chiefly occupying my mind, in spite of the rule that we ought not to take an interest in particular facts except in relation to their general significance, and notwithstanding the childishness, as great as that of longing to travel or to

THE CAPTIVE

make friends with women, of shattering our curiosity against such elements of the invisible torrent of painful realities which will always remain unknown to us as have happened to crystallise in our mind. But, even if we should succeed in destroying that crystallisation, it would at once be replaced by another. Yesterday I was afraid lest Albertine should go to see Mme. Verdurin. Now my only thought was of Léa. Jealousy, which wears a bandage over its eyes, is not merely powerless to discover anything in the darkness that enshrouds it, it is also one of those torments where the task must be incessantly repeated, like that of the Danaïds, or of Ixion. Even if her friends were not there, what impression might she not form of Léa, beautified by her stage attire, haloed with success, what thoughts would she leave in Albertine's mind, what desires which, even if she repressed them, would in my house disgust her with a life in which she was unable to gratify them.

Besides, how could I tell that she was not acquainted with Léa, and would not pay her a visit in her dressing-room; and, even if Léa did not know her, who could assure me that, having certainly seen her at Balbec, she would not recognise her and make a signal to her from the stage that would entitle Albertine to seek admission behind the scenes? A danger seems easy to avoid after it has been conjured away. This one was not yet conjured, I was afraid that it might never be, and it seemed to me all the more terrible. And yet this love for Albertine which I felt almost vanish when I attempted to realise it, seemed in a measure to acquire a proof of its existence from the intensity of my grief at this moment. I no longer cared about anything else, I thought only of

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

how I was to prevent her from remaining at the Trocadéro, I would have offered any sum in the world to Léa to persuade her not to go there. If then we prove our choice by the action that we perform rather than by the idea that we form, I must have been in love with Albertine. But this renewal of my suffering gave no further consistency to the image that I beheld of Albertine. She caused my calamities, like a deity that remains invisible. Making endless conjectures, I sought to shield myself from suffering without thereby realising my love. First of all, I must make certain that Léa was really going to perform at the Trocadéro. After dismissing the dairymaid, I telephoned to Bloch, whom I knew to be on friendly terms with Léa, in order to ask him. He knew nothing about it and seemed surprised that the matter could be of any importance to me. I decided that I must set to work immediately, remembered that Françoise was ready to go out and that I was not, and as I rose and dressed made her take a motor-car; she was to go to the Trocadéro, engage a seat, look high and low for Albertine and give her a note from myself. In this note I told her that I was greatly upset by a letter which I had just received from that same lady on whose account she would remember that I had been so wretched one night at Balbec. I reminded her that, on the following day, she had reproached me for not having sent for her. And so I was taking the liberty, I informed her, of asking her to sacrifice her matinée and to join me at home so that we might take a little fresh air together, which might help me to recover from the shock. But as I should be a long time in getting ready, she would oblige me, seeing that she had Françoise as an escort, by calling

THE CAPTIVE

at the Trois-Quartiers (this shop, being smaller, seemed to me less dangerous than the Bon Marché) to buy the scarf of white tulle that she required. My note was probably not superfluous. To tell the truth, I knew nothing that Albertine had done since I had come to know her, or even before. But in her conversation (she might, had I mentioned it to her, have replied that I had misunderstood her) there were certain contradictions, certain embellishments which seemed to me as decisive as catching her red-handed, but less serviceable against Albertine who, often caught out in wrongdoing like a child, had invariably, by dint of sudden, strategic changes of front, stultified my cruel onslaught and re-established her own position. Cruel, most of all, to myself. She employed, not from any refinement of style, but in order to correct her imprudences, abrupt breaches of syntax not unlike that figure which the grammarians call *anacoluthon* or some such name. Having allowed herself, while discussing women, to say: I remember, the other day, I . . .," she would at once catch her breath, after which "I" became "she": it was something that she had witnessed as an innocent spectator, not a thing that she herself had done. It was not herself that was the heroine of the anecdote. I should have liked to recall how, exactly, the sentence began, so as to conclude for myself, since she had broken off in the middle, how it would have ended. But as I had heard the end, I found it hard to remember the beginning, from which perhaps my air of interest had made her deviate, and was left still anxious to know what she was really thinking, what she really remembered. The first stages of falsehood on the part of our mistress are like the first stages of our

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

own love, or of a religious vocation. They take shape, accumulate, pass, without our paying them any attention. When we wish to remember in what manner we began to love a woman, we are already in love with her; when we dreamed about her before falling in love, we did not say to ourself: This is the prelude to a love affair, we must pay attention!—and our dreams took us by surprise, and we barely noticed them. So also, except in cases that are comparatively rare, it is only for the convenience of my narrative that I have frequently in these pages confronted one of Albertine's false statements with her previous assertion upon the same subject. This previous assertion, as often as not, since I could not read the future and did not at the time guess what contradictory affirmation was to form a pendant to it, had slipped past unperceived, heard it is true by my ears, but without my isolating it from the continuous flow of Albertine's speech. Later on, faced with the self-evident lie, or seized by an anxious doubt, I would fain have recalled it; but in vain; my memory had not been warned in time, and had thought it unnecessary to preserve a copy.

I urged Françoise, when she had got Albertine out of the hall, to let me know by telephone, and to bring her home, whether she was willing or not. "That would be the last straw, that she should not be willing to come and see Monsieur," replied Françoise. "But I don't know that she's as fond as all that of seeing me." "Then she must be an ungrateful wretch," went on Françoise, in whom Albertine was renewing after all these years the same torment of envy that Eulalie used at one time to cause her in my aunt's sickroom. Unaware that Al-

THE CAPTIVE

bertine's position in my household was not of her own seeking but had been decided by myself (a fact which, from motives of self-esteem and to make Françoise angry, I preferred to conceal from her), she admired and execrated the girl's dexterity, called her when she spoke of her to the other servants a "play-actress," a wheedler who could twist me round her little finger. She dared not yet declare open war against her, shewed her a smiling countenance and sought to acquire merit in my sight by the services which she performed for her in her relations with myself, deciding that it was useless to say anything to me and that she would gain nothing by doing so; but if the opportunity ever arose, if ever she discovered a crack in Albertine's armour, she was fully determined to enlarge it, and to part us for good and all. "Ungrateful? No, Françoise, I think it is I that am ungrateful, you don't know how good she is to me." (It was so soothing to give the impression that I was loved.) "Be as quick as you can." "All right, I'll get a move on." Her daughter's influence was beginning to contaminate Françoise's vocabulary. So it is that all languages lose their purity by the admission of new words. For this decadence of Françoise's speech, which I had known in its golden period, I was myself indirectly responsible. Françoise's daughter would not have made her mother's classic language degenerate into the vilest slang, had she been content to converse with her in dialect. She had never given up the use of it, and when they were both in my room at once, if they had anything private to say, instead of shutting themselves up in the kitchen, they armed themselves, right in the middle of my room, with a screen more impenetrable than the most carefully shut

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

door, by conversing in dialect. I supposed merely that the mother and daughter were not always on the best of terms, if I was to judge by the frequency with which they employed the only word that I could make out: *m'exasperate* (unless it was that the object of their exasperation was myself). Unfortunately the most unfamiliar tongue becomes intelligible in time when we are always hearing it spoken. I was sorry that this should be dialect, for I succeeded in picking it up, and should have been no less successful had Françoise been in the habit of expressing herself in Persian. In vain might Françoise, when she became aware of my progress, accelerate the speed of her utterance, and her daughter likewise, it was no good. The mother was greatly put out that I understood their dialect, then delighted to hear me speak it. I am bound to admit that her delight was a mocking delight, for albeit I came in time to pronounce the words more or less as she herself did, she found between our two ways of pronunciation an abyss of difference which gave her infinite joy, and she began to regret that she no longer saw people to whom she had not given a thought for years but who, it appeared, would have rocked with a laughter which it would have done her good to hear, if they could have heard me speaking their dialect so badly. In any case, no joy came to mitigate her sorrow that, however badly I might pronounce it, I understood it well. Keys become useless when the person whom we seek to prevent from entering can avail himself of a skeleton key or a jemmy. Dialect having become useless as a means of defence, she took to conversing with her daughter in a French which rapidly became that of the most debased epochs.

THE CAPTIVE

I was now ready, but Françoise had not yet telephoned; I ought perhaps to go out without waiting for a message. But how could I tell that she would find Albertine, that the latter would not have gone behind the scenes, that even if Françoise did find her, she would allow herself to be taken away? Half an hour later the telephone bell began to tinkle and my heart throbbed tumultuously with hope and fear. There came, at the bidding of an operator, a flying squadron of sounds which with an instantaneous speed brought me the words of the telephonist, not those of Françoise whom an inherited timidity and melancholy, when she was brought face to face with any object unknown to her fathers, prevented from approaching a telephone receiver, although she would readily visit a person suffering from a contagious disease. She had found Albertine in the lobby by herself, and Albertine had simply gone to warn Andrée that she was not staying any longer and then had hurried back to Françoise. "She wasn't angry? Oh, I beg your pardon; will you please ask the person whether the young lady was angry?" "The lady asks me to say that she wasn't at all angry, quite the contrary, in fact; anyhow, if she wasn't pleased, she didn't shew it. They are starting now for the Trois-Quartiers, and will be home by two o'clock." I gathered that two o'clock meant three, for it was past two o'clock already. But Françoise suffered from one of those peculiar, permanent, incurable defects, which we call *maladies*; she was never able either to read or to announce the time correctly. I have never been able to understand what went on in her head. When Françoise, after consulting her watch, if it was two o'clock, said: "It is one" or "it is three o'clock," I have never

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

been able to understand whether the phenomenon that occurred was situated in her vision or in her thought or in her speech; the one thing certain is that the phenomenon never failed to occur. Humanity is a very old institution. Heredity, cross-breeding have given an irresistible force to bad habits, to vicious reflexes. One person sneezes and gasps because he is passing a rosebush, another breaks out in an eruption at the smell of wet paint, has frequent attacks of colic if he has to start on a journey, and grandchildren of thieves who are themselves millionaires and generous cannot resist the temptation to rob you of fifty francs. As for knowing in what consisted Françoise's incapacity to tell the time correctly, she herself never threw any light upon the problem. For, notwithstanding the anger that I generally displayed at her inaccurate replies, Françoise never attempted either to apologise for her mistake or to explain it. She remained silent, pretending not to hear, and thereby making me lose my temper altogether. I should have liked to hear a few words of justification, were it only that I might smite her hip and thigh; but not a word, an indifferent silence. In any case, about the time-table for to-day there could be no doubt; Albertine was coming home with Françoise at three o'clock, Albertine would not be meeting Léa or her friends. Whereupon the danger of her renewing relations with them, having been averted, at once began to lose its importance in my eyes and I was amazed, seeing with what ease it had been averted, that I should have supposed that I would not succeed in averting it. I felt a keen impulse of gratitude to Albertine, who, I could see, had not gone to the Trocadéro to meet Léa's friends, and shewed me, by leaving the

THE CAPTIVE

performance and coming home at a word from myself, that she belonged to me more than I had imagined. My gratitude was even greater when a bicyclist brought me a line from her bidding me be patient, and full of the charming expressions that she was in the habit of using. "My darling, dear Marcel, I return less quickly than this cyclist, whose machine I would like to borrow in order to be with you sooner. How could you imagine that I might be angry or that I could enjoy anything better than to be with you? It will be nice to go out, just the two of us together; it would be nicer still if we never went out except together. The ideas you get into your head! What a Marcel! What a Marcel! Always and ever your Albertine."

The frocks that I bought for her, the yacht of which I had spoken to her, the wrappers from Fortuny's, all these things having in this obedience on Albertine's part not their recompense but their complement, appeared to me now as so many privileges that I was enjoying; for the duties and expenditure of a master are part of his dominion, and define it, prove it, fully as much as his rights. And these rights which she recognised in me were precisely what gave my expenditure its true character: I had a woman of my own, who, at the first word that I sent to her unexpectedly, made my messenger telephone humbly that she was coming, that she was allowing herself to be brought home immediately. I was more of a master than I had supposed. More of a master, in other words more of a slave. I no longer felt the slightest impatience to see Albertine. The certainty that she was at this moment engaged in shopping with Françoise, or that she would return with her at an approaching moment

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

which I would willingly have postponed, illuminated like a calm and radiant star a period of time which I would now have been far better pleased to spend alone. My love for Albertine had made me rise and get ready to go out, but it would prevent me from enjoying my outing. I reflected that on a Sunday afternoon like this little shopgirls, midinettes, prostitutes must be strolling in the Bois. And with the words *midinettes*, *little shopgirls* (as had often happened to me with a proper name, the name of a girl read in the account of a ball), with the image of a white bodice, a short skirt, since beneath them I placed a stranger who might perhaps come to love me, I created out of nothing desirable women, and said to myself: "How charming they must be!" But of what use would it be to me that they were charming, seeing that I was not going out alone. Taking advantage of the fact that I still was alone, and drawing the curtains together so that the sun should not prevent me from reading the notes, I sat down at the piano, turned over the pages of Vinteuil's sonata which happened to be lying there, and began to play; seeing that Albertine's arrival was still a matter of some time but was on the other hand certain, I had at once time to spare and tranquillity of mind. Floating in the expectation, big with security, of her return escorted by Françoise and in my confidence in her docility as in the blessedness of an inward light as warming as the light of the sun, I might dispose of my thoughts, detach them for a moment from Albertine, apply them to the sonata. In the latter, indeed, I did not take pains to remark how the combinations of the voluptuous and anxious motives corresponded even more closely now to my love for Albertine, from which

THE CAPTIVE

jealousy had been absent for so long that I had been able to confess to Swann my ignorance of that sentiment. No, taking the sonata from another point of view, regarding it in itself as the work of a great artist, I was carried back upon the tide of sound to the days at Combray—I do not mean at Montjouvain and along the Méséglise way, but to walks along the Guermantes way—when I had myself longed to become an artist. In definitely abandoning that ambition, had I forfeited something real? Could life console me for the loss of art, was there in art a more profound reality, in which our true personality finds an expression that is not afforded it by the activities of life? Every great artist seems indeed so different from all the rest, and gives us so strongly that sensation of individuality for which we seek in vain in our every day existence. Just as I was thinking thus, I was struck by a passage in the sonata, a passage with which I was quite familiar, but sometimes our attention throws a different light upon things which we have long known, and we remark in them what we have never seen before. As I played the passage, and for all that in it Vinteuil had been trying to express a fancy which would have been wholly foreign to Wagner, I could not help murmuring "*Tristan*," with the smile of an old friend of the family discovering a trace of the grandfather in an intonation, a gesture of the grandson who never set eyes on him. And as the friend then examines a photograph which enables him to estimate the likeness, so, in front of Vinteuil's sonata, I set up on the music-rest the score of *Tristan*, a selection from which was being given that afternoon, as it happened, at the Lamoureux concert. I had not, in admiring the Bayreuth master, any of the scruples

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

of those people whom, like Nietzsche, their sense of duty bids to shun in art as in life the beauty that tempts them, and who, tearing themselves from *Tristan* as they renounce *Parsifal*, and, in their spiritual asceticism, progressing from one mortification to another, arrive, by following the most bloody of *viae Crucis*, at exalting themselves to the pure cognition and perfect adoration of *Le Postillon de Longjumeau*. I began to perceive how much reality there is in the work of Wagner, when I saw in my mind's eye those insistent, fleeting themes which visit an act, withdraw only to return, and, sometimes distant, drowsy, almost detached, are at other moments, while remaining vague, so pressing and so near, so internal, so organic, so visceral, that one would call them the resumption not so much of a musical motive as of an attack of neuralgia.

Music, very different in this respect from Albertine's society, helped me to descend into myself, to make there a fresh discovery: that of the difference that I had sought in vain in life, in travel, a longing for which was given me, however, by this sonorous tide which sent its sunlit waves rolling to expire at my feet. A twofold difference. As the spectrum makes visible to us the composition of light, so the harmony of a Wagner, the colour of an Elstir enable us to know that essential quality of another person's sensations into which love for another person does not allow us to penetrate. Then there is diversity inside the work itself, by the sole means that it has of being effectively diverse, to wit combining diverse individualities. Where a minor composer would pretend that he was portraying a squire, or a knight, whereas he would make them both sing the same music, Wagner on

THE CAPTIVE

the contrary allots to each denomination a different reality, and whenever a squire appears, it is an individual figure, at once complicated and simplified, that, with a joyous, feudal clash of warring sounds, inscribes itself in the vast, sonorous mass. Whence the completeness of a music that is indeed filled with so many different musics, each of which is a person. A person or the impression that is given us by a momentary aspect of nature. Even what is most independent of the sentiment that it makes us feel preserves its outward and entirely definite reality; the song of a bird, the ring of a hunter's horn, the air that a shepherd plays upon his pipe, cut out against the horizon their silhouette of sound. It is true that Wagner had still to bring these together, to make use of them, to introduce them into an orchestral whole, to make them subservient to the highest musical ideals, but always respecting their original nature, as a carpenter respects the grain, the peculiar essence of the wood that he is carving.

But notwithstanding the richness of these works in which the contemplation of nature has its place by the side of action, by the side of persons who are something more than proper names, I thought how markedly, all the same, these works participate in that quality of being—albeit marvellously—always incomplete, which is the peculiarity of all the great works of the nineteenth century, with which the greatest writers of that century have stamped their books, but, watching themselves at work as though they were at once author and critic, have derived from this self-contemplation a novel beauty, exterior and superior to the work itself, imposing upon it retrospectively a unity, a greatness which it does not possess. Without pausing to consider him who saw in

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

his novels, after they had appeared, a *Human Comedy*, nor those who entitled heterogeneous poems or essays *The Legend of the Ages* or *The Bible of Humanity*, can we not say all the same of the last of these that he is so perfect an incarnation of the nineteenth century that the greatest beauties in Michelet are to be sought not so much in his work itself as in the attitudes that he adopts when he is considering his work, not in his *History of France* nor in his *History of the Revolution*, but in his prefaces to his books? Prefaces, that is to say pages written after the books themselves, in which he considers the books, and with which we must include here and there certain phrases beginning as a rule with a: "Shall I say?" which is not a scholar's precaution but a musician's cadence. The other musician, he who was delighting me at this moment, Wagner, retrieving some exquisite scrap from a drawer of his writing-table to make it appear as a theme, retrospectively necessary, in a work of which he had not been thinking at the moment when he composed it, then having composed a first mythological opera, and a second, and afterwards others still, and perceiving all of a sudden that he had written a tetralogy, must have felt something of the same exhilaration as Balzac, when, casting over his works the eye at once of a stranger and of a father, finding in one the purity of Raphael, in another the simplicity of the Gospel, he suddenly decided, as he shed a retrospective illumination upon them, that they would be better brought together in a cycle in which the same characters would reappear, and added to his work, in this act of joining it together, a stroke of the brush, the last and the most sublime. A unity that was ulterior, not artificial, otherwise it would have crumbled into dust

THE CAPTIVE

like all the other systematisations of mediocre writers who with the elaborate assistance of titles and sub-titles give themselves the appearance of having pursued a single and transcendent design. Not fictitious, perhaps indeed all the more real for being ulterior, for being born of a moment of enthusiasm when it is discovered to exist among fragments which need only to be joined together. A unity that has been unaware of itself, therefore vital and not logical, that has not banned variety, chilled execution. It emerges (only applying itself this time to the work as a whole) like a fragment composed separately, born of an inspiration, not required by the artificial development of a theme, which comes in to form an integral part of the rest. Before the great orchestral movement that precedes the return of Yseult, it is the work itself that has attracted to it the half-forgotten air of a shepherd's pipe. And, no doubt, just as the swelling of the orchestra at the approach of the ship, when it takes hold of these notes on the pipe, transforms them, infects them with its own intoxication, breaks their rhythm, clarifies their tone, accelerates their movement, multiplies their instrumentation, so no doubt Wagner himself was filled with joy when he discovered in his memory a shepherd's air, incorporated it in his work, gave it its full wealth of meaning. This joy moreover never forsakes him. In him, however great the melancholy of the poet, it is consoled, surpassed—that is to say destroyed, alas, too soon—by the delight of the craftsman. But then, no less than by the similarity I had remarked just now between Vinteuil's phrase and Wagner's, I was troubled by the thought of this Vulcan-like craftsmanship. Could it be this that gave to great artists the illusory

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

appearance of a fundamental originality, incommensurable with any other, the reflexion of a more than human reality, actually the result of industrious toil? If art be no more than that, it is not more real than life and I had less cause for regret. I went on playing *Tristan*. Separated from Wagner by the wall of sound, I could hear him exult, invite me to share his joy, I could hear ring out all the louder the immortally youthful laugh and the hammer-blows of Siegfried, in which, moreover, more marvellously struck were those phrases, the technical skill of the craftsman serving merely to make it easier for them to leave the earth, birds akin not to Lohengrin's swan but to that aeroplane which I had seen at Balbec convert its energy into vertical motion, float over the sea and lose itself in the sky. Perhaps, as the birds that soar highest and fly most swiftly have a stronger wing, one required one of these frankly material vehicles to explore the infinite, one of these 120 horse power machines, mark Mystery, in which nevertheless, however high one flies, one is prevented to some extent from enjoying the silence of space by the overpowering roar of the engine!

For some reason or other the course of my musings, which hitherto had wandered among musical memories, turned now to those men who have been the best performers of music in our day, among whom, slightly exaggerating his merit, I included Morel. At once my thoughts took a sharp turn, and it was Morel's character, certain eccentricities of his nature that I began to consider. As it happened—and this might be connected though it should not be confused with the neurasthenia to which he was a prey—Morel was in the habit of talking about his life, but always presented so shadowy a

THE CAPTIVE

picture of it that it was difficult to make anything out. For instance, he placed himself entirely at M. de Charlus's disposal on the understanding that he must keep his evenings free, as he wished to be able after dinner to attend a course of lectures on algebra. M. de Charlus conceded this, but insisted upon seeing him after the lectures. "Impossible, it's an old Italian painting" (this witticism means nothing when written down like this; but M. de Charlus having made Morel read *l'Éducation sentimentale*, in the penultimate chapter of which Frédéric Moreau uses this expression, it was Morel's idea of a joke never to say the word "impossible" without following it up with "it's an old Italian painting") "the lectures go on very late, and I've already given a lot of trouble to the lecturer, who naturally would be annoyed if I came away in the middle." "But there's no need to attend lectures, algebra is not a thing like swimming, or even English, you can learn it equally well from a book," replied M. de Charlus, who had guessed from the first that these algebra lectures were one of those images of which it was impossible to make out anything. It was perhaps some affair with a woman, or, if Morel was seeking to earn money in shady ways and had attached himself to the secret police, a nocturnal expedition with detectives, or possibly, what was even worse, an engagement as one of the young men whose services may be required in a brothel. "A great deal easier, from a book," Morel assured M. de Charlus, "for it's impossible to make head or tail of the lectures." "Then why don't you study it in my house, where you would be far more comfortable?" M. de Charlus might have answered, but took care not to do so, knowing that at once, preserving

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

only the same essential element that the evening hours must be set apart, the imaginary algebra course would change to a compulsory lesson in dancing or in drawing. In which M. de Charlus might have seen that he was mistaken, partially at least, for Morel did often spend his time at the Baron's in solving equations. M. de Charlus did raise the objection that algebra could be of little use to a violinist. Morel replied that it was a distraction which helped him to pass the time and to conquer his neurasthenia. No doubt M. de Charlus might have made inquiries, have tried to find out what actually were these mysterious and ineluctable lectures on algebra that were delivered only at night. But M. de Charlus was not qualified to unravel the tangled skein of Morel's occupations, being himself too much caught in the toils of social life. The visits he received or paid, the time he spent at his club, dinner-parties, evenings at the theatre prevented him from thinking about the problem, or for that matter about the violent and vindictive animosity which Morel had (it was reported) indulged and at the same time sought to conceal in the various environments, the different towns in which his life had been spent, and where people still spoke of him with a shudder, with bated breath, never venturing to say anything definite about him.

It was unfortunately one of the outbursts of this neurotic irritability that I was privileged to hear that day when, rising from the piano, I went down to the courtyard to meet Albertine, who still did not appear. As I passed by Jupien's shop, in which Morel and the girl who, I supposed, was shortly to become his wife were by themselves, Morel was screaming at the top of his

THE CAPTIVE

voice, thereby revealing an accent that I had never heard in his speech, a rustic tone, suppressed as a rule, and very strange indeed. His words were no less strange, faulty from the point of view of the French language, but his knowledge of everything was imperfect. "Will you get out of here, *grand pied de grue, grand pied de grue, grand pied de grue,*" he repeated to the poor girl who at first had certainly not understood what he meant, and now, trembling and indignant, stood motionless before him. "Didn't I tell you to get out of here, *grand pied de grue, grand pied de grue;* go and fetch your uncle till I tell him what you are, you whore." Just at that moment the voice of Jupien who was coming home talking to one of his friends was heard in the courtyard, and as I knew that Morel was an utter coward, I decided that it was unnecessary to join my forces with those of Jupien and his friend, who in another moment would have entered the shop, and I retired upstairs again to escape Morel, who, for all his having pretended to be so anxious that Jupien should be fetched (probably in order to frighten and subjugate the girl, an act of blackmail which rested probably upon no foundation), made haste to depart as soon as he heard his voice in the courtyard. The words I have set down here are nothing, they would not explain why my heart throbbed so as I went upstairs. These scenes of which we are witnesses in real life find an incalculable element of strength in what soldiers call, in speaking of a military offensive, the advantage of surprise, and however agreeably I might be soothed by the knowledge that Albertine, instead of remaining at the Trocadéro, was coming home to me, I still heard ringing in my ears the accent of those words ten times repeated:

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

"*Grand pied de grue, grand pied de grue,*" which had so appalled me.

Gradually my agitation subsided. Albertine was on her way home. I should hear her ring the bell in a moment. I felt that my life was no longer what it might have become, and that to have a woman in the house like this with whom quite naturally, when she returned home, I should have to go out, to the adornment of whose person the strength and activity of my nature were to be ever more and more diverted, made me as it were a bough that has blossomed, but 'is weighed down by the abundant fruit into which all its reserves of strength have passed. In contrast to the anxiety that I had been feeling only an hour earlier, the calm that I now felt at the prospect of Albertine's return was more ample than that which I had felt in the morning before she left the house. Anticipating the future, of which my mistress's docility made me practically master, more resistant, as though it were filled and stabilised by the imminent, importunate, inevitable, gentle presence, it was the calm (dispensing us from the obligation to seek our happiness in ourself) that is born of family feeling and domestic bliss. Family and domestic: such was again, no less than the sentiment that had brought me such great peace while I was waiting for Albertine, that which I felt later on when I drove out with her. She took off her glove for a moment, whether to touch my hand, or to dazzle me by letting me see on her little finger, next to the ring that Mme. Bontemps had given her, another upon which was displayed the large and liquid surface of a clear sheet of ruby: "What! Another ring, Albertine. Your aunt is generous!" "No, I didn't get this from my aunt," she

THE CAPTIVE

said with a laugh. "It was I who bought it, now that, thanks to you, I can save up ever so much money. I don't even know whose it was before. A visitor who was short of money left it with the landlord of an hotel where I stayed at Le Mans. He didn't know what to do with it, and would have let it go for much less than it was worth. But it was still far too dear for me. Now that, thanks to you, I'm becoming a smart lady, I wrote to ask him if he still had it. And here it is." "That makes a great many rings, Albertine. Where will you put the one that I am going to give you? Anyhow, it is a beautiful ring, I can't quite make out what that is carved round the ruby, it looks like a man's head grinning. But my eyes aren't strong enough." "They might be as strong as you like, you would be no better off. I can't make it out either." In the past it had often happened, as I read somebody's memoirs, or a novel, in which a man always goes out driving with a woman, takes tea with her, that I longed to be able to do likewise. I had thought sometimes that I was successful, as for instance when I took Saint-Loup's mistress out with me, or went to dinner with her. But in vain might I summon to my assistance the idea that I was at that moment actually impersonating the character that I had envied in the novel, that idea assured me that I ought to find pleasure in Rachel's society, and afforded me none. For, whenever we attempt to imitate something that has really existed, we forget that this something was brought about not by the desire to imitate but by an unconscious force which itself also is real; but this particular impression which I had been unable to derive from all my desire to taste a delicate pleasure in going

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

out with Rachel, behold I was now tasting it without having made the slightest effort to procure it, but for quite different reasons, sincere, profound; to take a single instance, for the reason that my jealousy prevented me from letting Albertine go out of my sight, and, the moment that I was able to leave the house, from letting her go anywhere without me. I tasted it only now, because our knowledge is not of the external objects which we try to observe, but of involuntary sensations, because in the past a woman might be sitting in the same carriage as myself, she was not *really* by my side, so long as she was not created afresh there at every moment by a need of her such as I felt of Albertine, so long as the constant caress of my gaze did not incessantly restore to her those tints that need to be perpetually refreshed, so long as my senses, appeased it might be but still endowed with memory, did not place beneath those colours savour and substance, so long as, combined with the senses and with the imagination that exalts them, jealousy was not maintaining the woman in equilibrium by my side by a compensated attraction as powerful as the law of gravity. Our motor-car passed swiftly along the boulevards, the avenues whose lines of houses, a rosy congelation of sunshine and cold, reminded me of calling upon Mme. Swann in the soft light of her chrysanthemums, before it was time to ring for the lamps.

I had barely time to make out, being divided from them by the glass of the motor-car as effectively as I should have been by that of my bedroom window, a young fruit seller, a dairymaid, standing in the doorway of her shop, illuminated by the sunshine like a heroine whom my desire was sufficient to launch upon exquisite adven-

THE CAPTIVE

tures, on the threshold of a romance which I might never know. For I could not ask Albertine to let me stop, and already the young women were no longer visible whose features my eyes had barely distinguished, barely caressed their fresh complexions in the golden vapour in which they were bathed. The emotion that I felt grip me when I caught sight of a wine-merchant's girl at her desk or a laundress chatting in the street was the emotion that we feel on recognising a goddess. Now that Olympus no longer exists, its inhabitants dwell upon the earth. And when, in composing a mythological scene, painters have engaged to pose as Venus or Ceres young women of humble birth, who follow the most sordid callings, so far from committing sacrilege, they have merely added, restored to them the quality, the various attributes which they had forfeited. "What did you think of the Trocadero, you little gadabout?" "I'm jolly glad I came away from it to go out with you. As architecture, it's pretty measly, isn't it? It's by Davioud, I fancy." "But how learned my little Albertine is becoming! Of course it was Davioud who built it, but I couldn't have told you offhand." "While you are asleep, I read your books, you old lazybones." "Listen, child, you are changing so fast and becoming so intelligent" (this was true, but even had it not been true I was not sorry that she should have the satisfaction, failing any other, of saying to herself that at least the time which she spent in my house was not being entirely wasted) "that I don't mind telling you things that would generally be regarded as false and which are all on the way to a truth that I am seeking. You know what is meant by impressionism?" "Of course!" "Very well then, this is what I

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

mean: you remember the church at Marcouville l'Orgueilleuse which Elstir disliked because it was new. Isn't it rather a denial of his own impressionism when he subtracts such buildings from the general impression in which they are contained to bring them out of the light in which they are dissolved and scrutinise like an archaeologist their intrinsic merit? When he begins to paint, have not a hospital, a school, a poster upon a hoarding the same value as a priceless cathedral which stands by their side in a single indivisible image? Remember how the façade was baked by the sun, how that carved frieze of saints swam upon the sea of light. What does it matter that a building is new, if it appears to be old, or even if it does not. All the poetry that the old quarters contain has been squeezed out to the last drop, but if you look at some of the houses that have been built lately for rich tradesmen, in the new districts, where the stone is all freshly cut and still quite white, don't they seem to rend the torrid air of noon in July, at the hour when the shopkeepers go home to luncheon in the suburbs, with a cry as harsh as the odour of the cherries waiting for the meal to begin in the darkened dining-room, where the prismatic glass knife-rests project a multicoloured fire as beautiful as the windows of Chartres?" "How wonderful you are! If I ever do become clever, it will be entirely owing to you." "Why on a fine day tear your eyes away from the Trocadéro, whose giraffe-neck towers remind one of the Charterhouse of Pavia?" "It reminded me also, standing up like that on its hill, of a Mantegna that you have, I think it's of Saint Sebastian, where in the background there's a city like an amphitheatre, and you would swear you saw the Trocadéro."

THE CAPTIVE

"There, you see! But how did you come across my Mantegna? You are amazing!" We had now reached a more plebeian quarter, and the installation of an ancillary Venus behind each counter made it as it were a suburban altar at the foot of which I would gladly have spent the rest of my life.

As one does on the eve of a premature death, I drew up a mental list of the pleasures of which I was deprived by Albertine's setting a full stop to my freedom. At Passy it was in the open street, so crowded were the footways, that a group of girls, their arms encircling one another's waist, left me marvelling at their smile. I had not time to see it clearly, but it is hardly probable that I exaggerated it; in any crowd after all, in any crowd of young people, it is not unusual to come upon the effigy of a noble profile. So that these assembled masses on public holidays are to the voluptuary as precious as is to the archaeologist the congested state of a piece of ground in which digging will bring to light ancient medals. We arrived at the Bois. I reflected that, if Albertine had not come out with me, I might at this moment, in the enclosure of the Champs-Élysées, have been hearing the Wagnerian tempest set all the rigging of the orchestra ascream, draw to itself, like a light spindrift, the tune of the shepherd's pipe which I had just been playing to myself, set it flying, mould it, deform it, divide it, sweep it away in an ever-increasing whirlwind. I was determined, at any rate, that our drive should be short, and that we should return home early, for, without having mentioned it to Albertine, I had decided to go that evening to the Verdurins'. They had recently sent me an invitation which I had flung into the waste paper basket

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

with all the rest. But I changed my mind for this evening, for I meant to try to find out who the people were that Albertine might have been hoping to meet there in the afternoon. To tell the truth, I had reached that stage in my relations with Albertine when, if everything remains the same, if things go on normally, a woman ceases to serve us except as a starting point towards another woman. She still retains a corner in our heart, but a very small corner; we hasten out every evening in search of unknown women, especially unknown women who are known to her and can tell us about her life. Herself, after all, we have possessed, have exhausted everything that she has consented to yield to us of herself. Her life is still herself, but that part of herself which we do not know, the things as to which we have questioned her in vain and which we shall be able to gather from fresh lips.

If my life with Albertine was to prevent me from going to Venice, from travelling, at least I might in the mean time, had I been alone, have made the acquaintance of the young *midinettes* scattered about in the sunlight of this fine Sunday, in the sum total of whose beauty I gave a considerable place to the unknown life that animated them. The eyes that we see, are they not shot through by a gaze as to which we do not know what images, memories, expectations, disdains it carries, a gaze from which we cannot separate them? The life that the person who passes by is living, will it not impart, according to what it is, a different value to the knitting of those brows, to the dilatation of those nostrils? Albertine's presence debarred me from going to join them and perhaps also from ceasing to desire them. The man who

THE CAPTIVE

would maintain in himself the desire to go on living, and his belief in something more delicious than the things of daily life, must go out driving; for the streets, the avenues are full of goddesses. But the goddesses do not allow us to approach them. Here and there, among the trees, at the entrance to some café, a waitress was watching like a nymph on the edge of a sacred grove, while beyond her three girls were seated by the sweeping arc of their bicycles that were stacked beside them, like three immortals leaning against the clouds or the fabulous coursers upon which they perform their mythological journeys. I remarked that, whenever Albertine looked for a moment at these girls, with a profound attention, she at once turned to gaze at myself. But I was not unduly troubled, either by the intensity of this contemplation, or by its brevity for which its intensity compensated; as for the latter, it often happened that Albertine, whether from exhaustion, or because it was an intense person's way of looking at other people, used to gaze thus in a sort of brown study at my father, it might be, or at Françoise; and as for the rapidity with which she turned to look at myself, it might be due to the fact that Albertine, knowing my suspicions, might prefer, even if they were not justified, to avoid giving them any foothold. This attention, moreover, which would have seemed to me criminal on Albertine's part (and quite as much so if it had been directed at young men), I fastened, without thinking myself reprehensible for an instant, almost deciding indeed that Albertine was reprehensible for preventing me, by her presence, from stopping the car and going to join them, upon all the midinettes. We consider it innocent to desire a thing and atrocious that the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

other person should desire it. And this contrast between what concerns ourself on the one hand, and on the other the person with whom we are in love, is not confined only to desire, but extends also to falsehood. What is more usual than a lie, whether it is a question of masking the daily weakness of a constitution which we wish to be thought strong, of concealing a vice, or of going off, without offending the other person, to the thing that we prefer? It is the most necessary instrument of conversation, and the one that is most widely used. But it is this which we actually propose to banish from the life of her whom we love; we watch for it, scent it, detest it everywhere. It appals us, it is sufficient to bring about a rupture, it seems to us to be concealing the most serious faults, except when it does so effectively conceal them that we do not suspect their existence. A strange state this in which we are so inordinately sensitive to a pathogenic agent which its universal swarming makes inoffensive to other people and so serious to the wretch who finds that he is no longer immune to it.

The life of these pretty girls (because of my long periods of seclusion, I so rarely met any) appeared to me as to everyone in whom facility of realisation has not destroyed the faculty of imagination, a thing as different from anything that I knew, as desirable as the most marvellous cities that travel holds in store for us.

The disappointment that I had felt with the women whom I had known, in the cities which I had visited, did not prevent me from letting myself be caught by the attraction of others or from believing in their reality; thus, just as seeing Venice—that Venice for which the spring weather too filled me with longing, and which

THE CAPTIVE

marriage with Albertine would prevent me from knowing—seeing Venice in a panorama which Ski would perhaps have declared to be more beautiful in tone than the place itself, would to me have been no substitute for the journey to Venice the length of which, determined without any reference to myself, seemed to me an indispensable preliminary; similarly, however pretty she might be, the midinette whom a procuress had artificially provided for me could not possibly be a substitute for her who with her awkward figure was strolling at this moment under the trees, laughing with a friend. The girl that I might find in a house of assignation, were she even better-looking than this one, could not be the same thing, because we do not look at the eyes of a girl whom we do not know as we should look at a pair of little discs of opal or agate. We know that the little ray which colours them or the diamond dust that makes them sparkle is all that we can see of a mind, a will, a memory in which is contained the home life that we do not know, the intimate friends whom we envy. The enterprise of taking possession of all this, which is so difficult, so stubborn, is what gives its value to the gaze far more than its merely physical beauty (which may serve to explain why the same young man can awaken a whole romance in the imagination of a woman who has heard somebody say that he is the Prince of Wales, whereas she pays no more attention to him after learning that she is mistaken); to find the midinette in the house of assignation is to find her emptied of that unknown life which permeates her and which we aspire to possess with her, it is to approach a pair of eyes that have indeed become mere precious stones, a nose whose quivering is as devoid of

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

meaning as that of a flower. No, that unknown midinette who was passing at that moment, it seemed to me as indispensable, if I wished to continue to believe in her reality, to test her resistance by adapting my behaviour to it, challenging a rebuff, returning to the charge, obtaining an assignation, waiting for her as she came away from her work, getting to know, episode by episode, all that composed the girl's life, traversing the space that, for her, enveloped the pleasure which I was seeking, and the distance which her different habits, her special mode of life, set between me and the attention, the favour which I wished to attain and capture, as making a long journey in the train if I wished to believe in the reality of Venice which I should see and which would not be merely a panoramic show in a World Exhibition. But this very parallel between desire and travel made me vow to myself that one day I would grasp a little more closely the nature of this force, invisible but as powerful as any faith, or as, in the world of physics, atmospheric pressure, which exalted to such a height cities and women so long as I did not know them, and slipped away from beneath them as soon as I had approached them, made them at once collapse and fall flat upon the dead level of the most commonplace reality.

Farther along another girl was kneeling beside her bicycle, which she was putting to rights. The repair finished, the young racer mounted her machine, but without straddling it as a man would have done. For a moment the bicycle swerved, and the young body seemed to have added to itself a sail, a huge wing; and presently we saw dart away at full speed the young creature half-human, half-winged, angel or peri, pursuing her course.

THE CAPTIVE

This was what a life with Albertine prevented me from enjoying. Prevented me, did I say? Should I not have thought rather: what it provided for my enjoyment. If Albertine had not been living with me, had been free, I should have imagined, and with reason, every woman to be a possible, a probable object of her desire, of her pleasure. They would have appeared to me like those dancers who, in a diabolical ballet, representing the Temptations to one person, plunge their darts in the heart of another. Midinettes, schoolgirls, actresses, how I should have hated them all! Objects of horror, I should have excepted them from the beauty of the universe. My bondage to Albertine, by permitting me not to suffer any longer on their account, restored them to the beauty of the world. Inoffensive, having lost the needle that stabs the heart with jealousy, I was able to admire them, to caress them with my eyes, another day more intimately perhaps. By secluding Albertine, I had at the same time restored to the universe all those rainbow wings which sweep past us in public gardens, ballrooms, theatres, and which became tempting once more to me because she could no longer succumb to their temptation. They composed the beauty of the world. They had at one time composed that of Albertine. It was because I had beheld her as a mysterious bird, then as a great actress of the beach, desired, perhaps won, that I had thought her wonderful. As soon as she was a captive in my house, the bird that I had seen one afternoon advancing with measured step along the front, surrounded by the congregation of the other girls like seagulls alighted from who knows whence, Albertine had lost all her colours, with all the chances that other people had of securing her for

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

themselves. Gradually she had lost her beauty. It required excursions like this, in which I imagined her, but for my presence, accosted by some woman, or by some young man, to make me see her again amid the splendour of the beach, albeit my jealousy was on a different plane from the decline of the pleasures of my imagination. But notwithstanding these abrupt reversions in which, desired by other people, she once more became beautiful in my eyes, I might very well divide her visit to me in two periods, an earlier in which she was still, although less so every day, the glittering actress of the beach, and a later period in which, become the grey captive, reduced to her dreary self, I required those flashes in which I remembered the past to make me see her again in colour.

Sometimes, in the hours in which I felt most indifferent towards her, there came back to me the memory of a far off moment when upon the beach, before I had made her acquaintance, a lady being near her with whom I was on bad terms and with whom I was almost certain now that she had had relations, she burst out laughing, staring me in the face in an insolent fashion. All round her hissed the blue and polished sea. In the sunshine of the beach, Albertine, in the midst of her friends, was the most beautiful of them all. She was a splendid girl, who in her familiar setting of boundless waters, had—precious in the eyes of the lady who admired her—inflicted upon me this unpardonable insult. It was unpardonable, for the lady would perhaps return to Balbec, would notice perhaps, on the luminous and echoing beach, that Albertine was absent. But she would not know that the girl was living with me, was wholly mine. The vast expanse of blue water, her forgetfulness of the fondness

THE CAPTIVE

that she had felt for this particular girl and would divert to others, had closed over the outrage that Albertine had done me, enshrining it in a glittering and unbreakable casket. Then hatred of that woman gnawed my heart; of Albertine also, but a hatred mingled with admiration of the beautiful, courted girl, with her marvellous hair, whose laughter upon the beach had been an insult. Shame, jealousy, the memory of my earliest desires and of the brilliant setting had restored to Albertine the beauty, the intrinsic merit of other days. And thus there alternated with the somewhat oppressive boredom that I felt in her company a throbbing desire, full of splendid storms and of regrets; according to whether she was by my side in my bedroom or I set her at liberty in my memory upon the front, in her gay seaside frocks, to the sound of the musical instruments of the sea,—Albertine, now extracted from that environment, possessed and of no great value, now plunged back into it, escaping from me into a past which I should never be able to know, hurting me, in her friend's presence, as much as the splash of the wave or the heat of the sun,—Albertine restored to the beach or brought back again to my room, in a sort of amphibious love.

Farther on, a numerous band were playing ball. All these girls had come out to make the most of the sunshine, for these days in February, even when they are brilliant, do not last long and the splendour of their light does not postpone the hour of its decline. Before that hour drew near, we passed some time in twilight, because after we had driven as far as the Seine, where Albertine admired, and by her presence prevented me from admiring the reflexions of red sails upon the wintry blue of the water,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

a solitary house in the distance like a single red poppy against the clear horizon, of which Saint-Cloud seemed, farther off again, to be the fragmentary, crumbling, rugged petrification, we left our motor-car and walked a long way together; indeed for some moments I gave her my arm, and it seemed to me that the ring which her arm formed round it united our two persons in a single self and linked our separate destinies together.

At our feet, our parallel shadows, where they approached and joined, traced an exquisite pattern. No doubt it already seemed to me a marvellous thing at home that Albertine should be living with me, that it should be she that came and lay down on my bed. But it was so to speak the transportation of that marvel out of doors, into the heart of nature, that by the shore of that lake in the Bois, of which I was so fond, beneath the trees, it should be her and none but her shadow, the pure and simplified shadow of her leg, of her bust, that the sun had to depict in monochrome by the side of mine upon the gravel of the path. And I found a charm that was more immaterial doubtless, but no less intimate, than in the drawing together, the fusion of our bodies, in that of our shadows. Then we returned to our car. And it chose, for our homeward journey, a succession of little winding lanes along which the wintry trees, clothed, like ruins, in ivy and brambles, seemed to be pointing the way to the dwelling of some magician. No sooner had we emerged from their dusky cover than we found, upon leaving the Bois, the daylight still so bright that I imagined that I should still have time to do everything that I wanted to do before dinner, when, only a few minutes later, at the moment when our car approached the Arc

THE CAPTIVE

de Triomphe, it was with a sudden start of surprise and dismay that I perceived, over Paris, the moon prematurely full, like the face of a clock that has stopped and makes us think that we are late for an engagement. We had told the driver to take us home. To Albertine, this meant also coming to my home. The company of those women, however dear to us, who are obliged to leave us and return home, does not bestow that peace which I found in the company of Albertine seated in the car by my side, a company that was conveying us not to the void in which lovers have to part but to an even more stable and more sheltered union in my home, which was also hers, the material symbol of my possession of her. To be sure, in order to possess, one must first have desired. We do not possess a line, a surface, a mass unless it is occupied by our love. But Albertine had not been for me during our drive, as Rachel had been in the past, a futile dust of flesh and clothing. The imagination of my eyes, my lips, my hands had at Balbec so solidly built, so tenderly polished her body that now in this car, to touch that body, to contain it, I had no need to press my own body against Albertine, nor even to see her; it was enough to hear her, and if she was silent to know that she was by my side; my interwoven senses enveloped her altogether and when, as we arrived at the front door, she quite naturally alighted, I stopped for a moment to tell the chauffeur to call for me later on, but my gaze enveloped her still while she passed ahead of me under the arch, and it was still the same inert, domestic calm that I felt as I saw her thus, solid, flushed, opulent and captive, returning home quite naturally with myself, as a woman who was my own property, and,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

protected by its walls, disappearing into our house. Unfortunately, she seemed to feel herself a prisoner there, and to share the opinion of that Mme. de La Rochefoucauld who, when somebody asked her whether she was not glad to live in so beautiful a home as Liancourt, replied: "There is no such thing as a beautiful prison"; if I was to judge by her miserable, weary expression that evening as we dined together in my room. I did not notice it at first; and it was I that was made wretched by the thought that, if it had not been for Albertine (for with her I should have suffered too acutely from jealousy in an hotel where all day long she would have been exposed to contact with a crowd of strangers), I might at that moment be dining in Venice in one of those little restaurants, barrel-vaulted like the hold of a ship, from which one looks out on the Grand Canal through arched windows framed in Moorish mouldings.

I ought to add that Albertine greatly admired in my room a big bronze by Barbedienne which with ample justification Bloch considered extremely ugly. He had perhaps less reason to be surprised at my having kept it. I had never sought, like him, to furnish for artistic effect, to compose my surroundings, I was too lazy, too indifferent to the things that I was in the habit of seeing every day. Since my taste was not involved, I had a right not to harmonise my interior. I might perhaps, even without that, have discarded the bronze. But ugly and expensive things are of great use, for they enjoy, among people who do not understand us, who have not our taste and with whom we cannot fall in love, a prestige that would not be shared by some proud object that does not reveal its beauty. Now the people who do not under-

THE CAPTIVE

stand us are precisely the people with regard to whom alone it may be useful to us to employ a prestige which our intellect is enough to assure us among superior people. Albertine might indeed be beginning to shew taste, she still felt a certain respect for the bronze, and this respect was reflected upon myself in a consideration which, coming from Albertine, mattered infinitely more to me than the question of keeping a bronze which was a trifle degrading, since I was in love with Albertine.

But the thought of my bondage ceased of a sudden to weigh upon me and I looked forward to prolonging it still farther, because I seemed to perceive that Albertine was painfully conscious of her own. True that whenever I had asked her whether she was not bored in my house, she had always replied that she did not know where it would be possible to have a happier time. But often these words were contradicted by an air of nervous exhaustion, of longing to escape.

Certainly if she had the tastes with which I had credited her, this inhibition from ever satisfying them must have been as provoking to her as it was calming to myself, calming to such an extent that I should have decided that the hypothesis of my having accused her unjustly was the most probable, had it not been so difficult to fit into this hypothesis the extraordinary pains that Albertine was taking never to be alone, never to be disengaged, never to stop for a moment outside the front door when she came in, to insist upon being accompanied, whenever she went to the telephone, by some one who would be able to repeat to me what she had said, by Françoise or Andrée, always to leave me alone (without appearing to be doing so on purpose) with the latter,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

after they had been out together, so that I might obtain a detailed report of their outing. With this marvellous docility were contrasted certain quickly repressed starts of impatience, which made me ask myself whether Albertine was not planning to cast off her chain. Certain subordinate incidents seemed to corroborate my supposition. Thus, one day when I had gone out by myself, in the Passy direction, and had met Gisèle, we began to talk about one thing and another. Presently, not without pride at being able to do so, I informed her that I was constantly seeing Albertine. Gisèle asked me where she could find her, since there was something that she simply *must* tell her. "Why, what is it?" "Something to do with some young friends of hers." "What friends? I may perhaps be able to tell you, though that need not prevent you from seeing her." "Oh, girls she knew years ago, I don't remember their names," Gisèle replied vaguely, and beat a retreat. She left me, supposing herself to have spoken with such prudence that the whole story must seem to me perfectly straightforward. But falsehood is so unexacting, needs so little help to make itself manifest! If it had been a question of friends of long ago, whose very names she no longer remembered, why *must* she speak about them to Albertine? This "*must*," akin to an expression dear to Mme. Cottard: "in the nick of time," could be applicable only to something particular, opportune, perhaps urgent, relating to definite persons. Besides, something about her way of opening her mouth, as though she were going to yawn, with a vague expression, as she said to me (almost drawing back her body, as though she began to reverse her engine at this point in our conversation): "Oh, I don't

THE CAPTIVE

know, I don't remember their names," made her face, and in harmony with it her voice, as clear a picture of falsehood as the wholly different air, tense, excited, of her previous "*must*" was of truth. I did not question Gisèle. Of what use would it have been to me? Certainly, she was not lying in the same fashion as Albertine. And certainly Albertine's lies pained me more. But they had obviously a point in common: the fact of the lie itself, which in certain cases is self-evident. Not evidence of the truth that the lie conceals. We know that each murderer in turn imagines that he has arranged everything so cleverly that he will not be caught, and so it is with liars, particularly the woman with whom we are in love. We do not know where she has been, what she has been doing. But at the very moment when she speaks, when she speaks of something else beneath which lies hidden the thing that she does not mention, the lie is immediately perceived, and our jealousy increased, since we are conscious of the lie, and cannot succeed in discovering the truth. With Albertine, the impression that she was lying was conveyed by many of the peculiarities which we have already observed in the course of this narrative, but especially by this, that, when she was lying, her story broke down either from inadequacy, omission, improbability, or on the contrary from a surfeit of petty details intended to make it seem probable. Probability, notwithstanding the idea that the liar has formed of it, is by no means the same as truth. Whenever, while listening to something that is true, we hear something that is only probable, which is perhaps more so than the truth, which is perhaps too probable, the ear that is at all sensitive feels that it is not correct,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

as with a line that does not scan or a word read aloud in mistake for another. Our ear feels this, and if we are in love our heart takes alarm. Why do we not reflect at the time, when we change the whole course of our life because we do not know whether a woman went along the Rue de Berri or the Rue Washington, why do we not reflect that these few hundred yards of difference, and the woman herself, will be reduced to the hundred millionth part of themselves (that is to say to dimensions far beneath our perception), if we only have the wisdom to remain for a few years without seeing the woman, and that she who has out-Gullivered Gulliver in our eyes will shrink to a Lilliputian whom no microscope—of the heart, at least, for that of the disinterested memory is more powerful and less fragile—can ever again perceive! However it may be, if there was a point in common—the lie itself—between Albertine's lies and Gisèle's, still Gisèle did not lie in the same fashion as Albertine, nor indeed in the same fashion as Andrée, but their respective lies dovetailed so neatly into one another, while presenting a great variety, that the little band had the impenetrable solidity of certain commercial houses, booksellers' for example or printing presses, where the wretched author will never succeed, notwithstanding the diversity of the persons employed in them, in discovering whether he is being swindled or not. The editor of the newspaper or review lies with an attitude of sincerity all the more solemn in that he is frequently obliged to conceal the fact that he himself does exactly the same things and indulges in the same commercial practices that he denounced in other editors or theatrical managers, in other publishers, when he chose as his battle-cry, when he raised against them the stand-

THE CAPTIVE

ard of Sincerity. The fact of a man's having proclaimed (as leader of a political party, or in any other capacity) that it is wicked to lie, obliges him as a rule to lie more than other people, without on that account abandoning the solemn mask, doffing the august tiara of sincerity. The "sincere" gentleman's partner lies in a different and more ingenuous fashion. He deceives his author as he deceives his wife, with tricks from the vaudeville stage. The secretary of the firm, a blunt and honest man, lies quite simply, like an architect who promises that your house will be ready at a date when it will not have been begun. The head reader, an angelic soul, flutters from one to another of the three, and without knowing what the matter is, gives them, by a brotherly scruple and out of affectionate solidarity, the precious support of a word that is above suspicion. These four persons live in a state of perpetual dissension to which the arrival of the author puts a stop. Over and above their private quarrels, each of them remembers the paramount military duty of rallying to the support of the threatened "corps." Without realising it, I had long been playing the part of this author among the little band. If Gisèle had been thinking, when she used the word "must," of some one of Albertine's friends who was proposing to go abroad with her as soon as my mistress should have found some pretext or other for leaving me, and had meant to warn Albertine that the hour had now come or would shortly strike, she, Gisèle, would have let herself be torn to pieces rather than tell me so; it was quite useless therefore to ply her with questions. Meetings such as this with Gisèle were not alone in accentuating my doubts. For instance, I admired Albertine's sketches. Albertine's

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

sketches, the touching distractions of the captive, moved me so that I congratulated her upon them. "No, they're dreadfully bad, but I've never had a drawing lesson in my life." "But one evening at Balbec you sent word to me that you had stayed at home to have a drawing lesson." I reminded her of the day and told her that I had realised at the time that people did not have drawing lessons at that hour in the evening. Albertine blushed. "It is true," she said, "I was not having drawing lessons, I told you a great many lies at first, that I admit. But I never lie to you now." I would so much have liked to know what were the many lies that she had told me at first, but I knew beforehand that her answers would be fresh lies. And so I contented myself with kissing her. I asked her to tell me one only of those lies. She replied: "Oh, well; for instance when I said that the sea air was bad for me." I ceased to insist in the face of this unwillingness to reveal.

To make her chain appear lighter, the best thing was no doubt to make her believe that I was myself about to break it. In any case, I could not at that moment confide this mendacious plan to her, she had been too kind in returning from the Trocadéro that afternoon; what I could do, far from distressing her with the threat of a rupture, was at the most to keep to myself those dreams of a perpetual life together which my grateful heart kept forming. As I looked at her, I found it hard to restrain myself from pouring them out to her, and she may perhaps have noticed this. Unfortunately the expression of such dreams is not contagious. The case of an affected old woman like M. de Charlus who, by dint of never seeing in his imagination anything but a stalwart young

THE CAPTIVE

man, thinks that he has himself become a stalwart young man, all the more so the more affected and ridiculous he becomes, this case is more general, and it is the tragedy of an impassioned lover that he does not take into account the fact that while he sees in front of him a beautiful face, his mistress is seeing his face which is not made any more beautiful, far from it, when it is distorted by the pleasure that is aroused in it by the sight of beauty. Nor indeed does love exhaust the whole of this case; we do not see our own body, which other people see, and we "follow" our own thought, the object invisible to other people which is before our eyes. This object the artist does sometimes enable us to see in his work. Whence it arises that the admirers of his work are disappointed in its author, upon whose face that internal beauty is imperfectly reflected.

Every person whom we love, indeed to a certain extent every person is to us like Janus, presenting to us the face that we like if that person leaves us, the repellent face if we know him or her to be perpetually at our disposal. In the case of Albertine, the prospect of her continued society was painful to me in another fashion which I cannot explain in this narrative. It is terrible to have the life of another person attached to our own like a bomb which we hold in our hands, unable to get rid of it without committing a crime. But let us take as a parallel the ups and downs, the dangers, the anxieties, the fear of seeing believed in time to come false and probable things which one will not be able then to explain, feelings that one experiences if one lives in the intimate society of a madman. For instance, I pitied M. de Charlus for living with Morel (immediately the memory of the scene that

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

afternoon made me feel the left side of my breast heavier than the other); leaving out of account the relations that may or may not have existed between them, M. de Charlus must have been unaware at the outset that Morel was mad. Morel's beauty, his stupidity, his pride must have deterred the Baron from exploring so deeply, until the days of melancholy when Morel accused M. de Charlus of responsibility for his sorrows, without being able to furnish any explanation, abused him for his want of confidence, by the aid of false but extremely subtle reasoning, threatened him with desperate resolutions, while throughout all this there persisted the most cunning regard for his own most immediate interests. But all this is only a comparison. Albertine was not mad.

I learned that a death had occurred during the day which distressed me greatly, that of Bergotte. It was known that he had been ill for a long time past. Not, of course, with the illness from which he had suffered originally and which was natural. Nature hardly seems capable of giving us any but quite short illnesses. But medicine has annexed to itself the art of prolonging them. Remedies, the respite that they procure, the relapses that a temporary cessation of them provokes, compose a sham illness to which the patient grows so accustomed that he ends by making it permanent, just as children continue to give way to fits of coughing long after they have been cured of the whooping cough. Then remedies begin to have less effect, the doses are increased, they cease to do any good, but they have begun to do harm thanks to that lasting indisposition. Nature would not have offered them so long a tenure. It is a great miracle that medicine can almost equal nature in forcing a man to remain in bed, to continue on pain of death the use of some drug. From that moment the illness artificially grafted has taken root, has become a secondary but a genuine illness, with this difference only that natural illnesses are cured, but never those which medicine creates, for it knows not the secret of their cure.

For years past Bergotte had ceased to go out of doors. Anyhow, he had never cared for society, or had cared for it for a day only, to despise it as he despised everything else and in the same fashion, which was his own, namely to despise a thing not because it was beyond his

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

reach but as soon as he had reached it. He lived so simply that nobody suspected how rich he was, and anyone who had known would still have been mistaken, for he would have thought him a miser, whereas no one was ever more generous. He was generous above all towards women,—girls, one ought rather to say—who were ashamed to receive so much in return for so little. He excused himself in his own eyes because he knew that he could never produce such good work as in an atmosphere of amorous feelings. Love is too strong a word, pleasure that is at all deeply rooted in the flesh is helpful to literary work because it cancels all other pleasures, for instance the pleasures of society, those which are the same for everyone. And even if this love leads to disillusionment, it does at least stir, even by so doing, the surface of the soul which otherwise would be in danger of becoming stagnant. Desire is therefore not without its value to the writer in detaching him first of all from his fellow men and from conforming to their standards, and afterwards in restoring some degree of movement to a spiritual machine which, after a certain age, tends to become paralysed. We do not succeed in being happy but we make observation of the reasons which prevent us from being happy and which would have remained invisible to us but for these loopholes opened by disappointment. Dreams are not to be converted into reality, that we know; we would not form any, perhaps, were it not for desire, and it is useful to us to form them in order to see them fail and to be instructed by their failure. And so Bergotte said to himself: "I am spending more than a multimillionaire would spend upon girls, but the pleasures or disappointments that they give me make me

THE CAPTIVE

write a book which brings me money." Economically, this argument was absurd, but no doubt he found some charm in thus transmuting gold into caresses and caresses into gold. We saw, at the time of my grandmother's death, how a weary old age loves repose. Now in society, there is nothing but conversation. It may be stupid, but it has the faculty of suppressing women who are nothing more than questions and answers. Removed from society, women become once more what is so reposeful to a weary old man, an object of contemplation. In any case, it was no longer a question of anything of this sort. I have said that Bergotte never went out of doors, and when he got out of bed for an hour in his room, he would be smothered in shawls, plaids, all the things with which a person covers himself before exposing himself to intense cold or getting into a railway train. He would apologise to the few friends whom he allowed to penetrate to his sanctuary, and, pointing to his tartan plaids, his travelling-rugs, would say merrily: "After all, my dear fellow, life, as Anaxagoras has said, is a journey." Thus he went on growing steadily colder, a tiny planet that offered a prophetic image of the greater, when gradually heat will withdraw from the earth, then life itself. Then the resurrection will have come to an end, for if, among future generations, the works of men are to shine, there must first of all be men. If certain kinds of animals hold out longer against the invading chill, when there are no longer any men, and if we suppose Bergotte's fame to have lasted so long, suddenly it will be extinguished for all time. It will not be the last animals that will read him, for it is scarcely probable that, like the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost, they will be able to understand the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

speech of the various races of mankind without having learned it.

In the months that preceded his death, Bergotte suffered from insomnia, and what was worse, whenever he did fall asleep, from nightmares which, if he awoke, made him reluctant to go to sleep again. He had long been a lover of dreams, even of bad dreams, because thanks to them and to the contradiction they present to the reality which we have before us in our waking state, they give us, at the moment of waking if not before, the profound sensation of having slept. But Bergotte's nightmares were not like that. When he spoke of nightmares, he used in the past to mean unpleasant things that passed through his brain. Latterly, it was as though proceeding from somewhere outside himself that he would see a hand armed with a damp cloth which, passed over his face by an evil woman, kept scrubbing him awake, an intolerable itching in his thighs, the rage—because Bergotte had murmured in his sleep that he was driving badly—of a raving lunatic of a cabman who flung himself upon the writer, biting and gnawing his fingers. Finally, as soon as in his sleep it had grown sufficiently dark, nature arranged a sort of undress rehearsal of the apoplectic stroke that was to carry him off: Bergotte arrived in a carriage beneath the porch of Swann's new house, and tried to alight. A stunning giddiness glued him to his seat, the porter came forward to help him out of the carriage, he remained seated, unable to rise, to straighten his legs. He tried to pull himself up with the help of the stone pillar that was by his side, but did not find sufficient support in it to enable him to stand.

He consulted doctors who, flattered at being called in

THE CAPTIVE

by him, saw in his virtue as an incessant worker (it was twenty years since he had written anything), in his overstrain, the cause of his ailments. They advised him not to read thrilling stories (he never read anything), to benefit more by the sunshine, which was "indispensable to life" (he had owed a few years of comparative health only to his rigorous seclusion indoors), to take nourishment (which made him thinner, and nourished nothing but his nightmares). One of his doctors was blessed with the spirit of contradiction, and whenever Bergotte consulted him in the absence of the others, and, in order not to offend him, suggested to him as his own ideas what the others had advised, this doctor, thinking that Bergotte was seeking to have prescribed for him something that he himself liked, at once forbade it, and often for reasons invented so hurriedly to meet the case that in face of the material objections which Bergotte raised, this argumentative doctor was obliged in the same sentence to contradict himself, but, for fresh reasons, repeated the original prohibition. Bergotte returned to one of the first of these doctors, a man who prided himself on his cleverness, especially in the presence of one of the leading men of letters, and who, if Bergotte insinuated: "I seem to remember, though, that Dr. X—— told me—long ago, of course—that that might congest my kidneys and brain . . ." would smile sardonically, raise his finger and enounce: "I said use, I did not say abuse. Naturally every remedy, if one takes it in excess, becomes a two-edged sword." There is in the human body a certain instinct for what is beneficial to us, as there is in the heart for what is our moral duty, an instinct which no authorisation by a Doctor of Medicine or Divinity can

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

replace. We know that cold baths are bad for us, we like them, we can always find a doctor to recommend them, not to prevent them from doing us harm. From each of these doctors Bergotte took something which, in his own wisdom, he had forbidden himself for years past. After a few weeks, his old troubles had reappeared, the new had become worse. Maddened by an unintermittent pain, to which was added insomnia broken only by brief spells of nightmare, Bergotte called in no more doctors and tried with success, but to excess, different narcotics, hopefully reading the prospectus that accompanied each of them, a prospectus which proclaimed the necessity of sleep but hinted that all the preparations which induce it (except that contained in the bottle round which the prospectus was wrapped, which never produced any toxic effect) were toxic, and therefore made the remedy worse than the disease. Bergotte tried them all. Some were of a different family from those to which we are accustomed, preparations for instance of amyl and ethyl. When we absorb a new drug, entirely different in composition, it is always with a delicious expectancy of the unknown. Our heart beats as at a first assignation. To what unknown forms of sleep, of dreams, is the newcomer going to lead us? He is inside us now, he has the control of our thoughts. In what fashion are we going to fall asleep? And, once we are asleep, by what strange paths, up to what peaks, into what unfathomed gulfs is he going to lead us? With what new grouping of sensations are we to become acquainted on this journey? Will it bring us in the end to illness? To blissful happiness? To death? Bergotte's death had come to him overnight, when he had thus entrusted himself to one of these

THE CAPTIVE

friends (a friend? or an enemy, rather?) who proved too strong for him. The circumstances of his death were as follows. An attack of uraemia, by no means serious, had led to his being ordered to rest. But one of the critics having written somewhere that in Vermeer's *Street in Delft* (lent by the Gallery at The Hague for an exhibition of Dutch painting), a picture which he adored and imagined that he knew by heart, a little patch of yellow wall (which he could not remember) was so well painted that it was, if one looked at it by itself, like some priceless specimen of Chinese art, of a beauty that was sufficient in itself, Bergotte ate a few potatoes, left the house, and went to the exhibition. At the first few steps that he had to climb he was overcome by giddiness. He passed in front of several pictures and was struck by the stiffness and futility of so artificial a school, nothing of which equalled the fresh air and sunshine of a Venetian palazzo, or of an ordinary house by the sea. At last he came to the Vermeer which he remembered as more striking, more different from anything else that he knew, but in which, thanks to the critic's article, he remarked for the first time some small figures in blue, that the ground was pink, and finally the precious substance of the tiny patch of yellow wall. His giddiness increased; he fixed his eyes, like a child upon a yellow butterfly which it is trying to catch, upon the precious little patch of wall. "That is how I ought to have written," he said. "My last books are too dry, I ought to have gone over them with several coats of paint, made my language exquisite in itself, like this little patch of yellow wall." Meanwhile he was not unconscious of the gravity of his condition. In a celestial balance there appeared to him, upon one

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

of its scales, his own life, while the other contained the little patch of wall so beautifully painted in yellow. He felt that he had rashly surrendered the former for the latter. "All the same," he said to himself, "I have no wish to provide the 'feature' of this exhibition for the evening papers."

He repeated to himself: "Little patch of yellow wall, with a sloping roof, little patch of yellow wall." While doing so he sank down upon a circular divan; and then at once he ceased to think that his life was in jeopardy and, reverting to his natural optimism, told himself: "It is just an ordinary indigestion from those potatoes; they weren't properly cooked; it is nothing." A fresh attack beat him down; he rolled from the divan to the floor, as visitors and attendants came hurrying to his assistance. He was dead. Permanently dead? Who shall say? Certainly our experiments in spiritualism prove no more than the dogmas of religion that the soul survives death. All that we can say is that everything is arranged in this life as though we entered it carrying the burden of obligations contracted in a former life; there is no reason inherent in the conditions of life on this earth that can make us consider ourselves obliged to do good, to be fastidious, to be polite even, nor make the talented artist consider himself obliged to begin over again a score of times a piece of work the admiration aroused by which will matter little to his body devoured by worms, like the patch of yellow wall painted with so much knowledge and skill by an artist who must for ever remain unknown and is barely identified under the name Vermeer. All these obligations which have not their sanction in our present life seem to belong to a different world, founded

THE CAPTIVE

upon kindness, scrupulosity, self-sacrifice, a world entirely different from this, which we leave in order to be born into this world, before perhaps returning to the other to live once again beneath the sway of those unknown laws which we have obeyed because we bore their precepts in our hearts, knowing not whose hand had traced them there—those laws to which every profound work of the intellect brings us nearer and which are invisible only—and still!—to fools. So that the idea that Bergotte was not wholly and permanently dead is by no means improbable.

They buried him, but all through the night of mourning, in the lighted windows, his books arranged three by three kept watch like angels with outspread wings and seemed, for him who was no more, the symbol of his resurrection.

I learned, I have said, that day that Bergotte was dead. And I marvelled at the carelessness of the newspapers which—each of them reproducing the same paragraph—stated that he had died the day before. For, the day before, Albertine had met him, as she informed me that very evening, and indeed she had been a little late in coming home, for she had stopped for some time talking to him. She was doubtless the last person to whom he had spoken. She knew him through myself who had long ceased to see him, but, as she had been anxious to make his acquaintance, I had, a year earlier, written to ask the old master whether I might bring her to see him. He had granted my request, a trifle hurt, I fancy, that I should be visiting him only to give pleasure to another person, which was a proof of my indifference to himself.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

These cases are frequent: sometimes the man or woman whom we implore to receive us not for the pleasure of conversing with them again, but on behalf of a third person, refuses so obstinately that our protégée concludes that we have boasted of an influence which we do not possess; more often the man of genius or the famous beauty consents, but, humiliated in their glory, wounded in their affection, feel for us afterwards only a diminished, sorrowful, almost contemptuous attachment. I discovered long after this that I had falsely accused the newspapers of inaccuracy, since on the day in question Albertine had not met Bergotte, but at the time I had never suspected this for a single instant, so naturally had she told me of the incident, and it was not until much later that I discovered her charming skill in lying with simplicity. The things that she said, the things that she confessed were so stamped with the character of formal evidence—what we see, what we learn from an unquestionable source—that she sowed thus in the empty spaces of her life episodes of another life the falsity of which I did not then suspect and began to perceive only at a much later date. I have used the word “confessed,” for the following reason. Sometimes a casual meeting gave me a jealous suspicion in which by her side there figured in the past, or alas in the future, another person. In order to appear certain of my facts, I mentioned the person’s name, and Albertine said: “Yes, I met her, a week ago, just outside the house. I had to be polite and answer her when she spoke to me. I walked a little way with her. But there never has been anything between us. There never will be.” Now Albertine had not even met this person, for the simple reason that the person had

THE CAPTIVE

not been in Paris for the last ten months. But my mistress felt that a complete denial would sound hardly probable. Whence this imaginary brief encounter, related so simply that I could see the lady stop, bid her good day, walk a little way with her. The evidence of my senses, if I had been in the street at that moment, would perhaps have informed me that the lady had not been with Albertine. But if I had knowledge of the fact, it was by one of those chains of reasoning in which the words of people in whom we have confidence insert strong links, and not by the evidence of my senses. To invoke this evidence of the senses I should have had to be in the street at that particular moment, and I had not been. We may imagine, however, that such an hypothesis is not improbable: I might have gone out, and have been passing along the street at the time at which Albertine was to tell me in the evening (not having seen me there) that she had gone a little way with the lady, and I should then have known that Albertine was lying. But is that quite certain even then? A religious obscurity would have clouded my mind, I should have begun to doubt whether I had seen her by herself, I should barely have sought to understand by what optical illusion I had failed to perceive the lady, and should not have been greatly surprised to find myself mistaken, for the stellar universe is not so difficult of comprehension as the real actions of other people, especially of the people with whom we are in love, strengthened as they are against our doubts by fables devised for their protection. For how many years on end can they not allow our apathetic love to believe that they have in some foreign country a sister, a brother, a sister-in-law who have never existed!

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

The evidence of the senses is also an operation of the mind in which conviction creates the evidence. We have often seen her sense of hearing convey to Françoise not the word that was uttered but what she thought to be its correct form, which was enough to prevent her from hearing the correction implied in a superior pronunciation. Our butler was cast in a similar mould. M. de Charlus was in the habit of wearing at this time—for he was constantly changing—very light trousers which were recognisable a mile off. Now our butler, who thought that the word *pissotière* (the word denoting what M. de Rambuteau had been so annoyed to hear the Duc de Guermantes call a Rambuteau stall) was really *pistière*, never once in the whole of his life heard a single person say *pissotière*, albeit the word was frequently pronounced thus in his hearing. But error is more obstinate than faith and does not examine the grounds of its belief. Constantly the butler would say: "I'm sure M. le Baron de Charlus must have caught a disease to stand about as long as he does in a *pistière*. That's what comes of running after the girls at his age. You can tell what he is by his trousers. This morning, Madame sent me with a message to Neuilly. As I passed the *pistière* in the Rue de Bourgogne I saw M. le Baron de Charlus go in. When I came back from Neuilly, quite an hour later, I saw his yellow trousers in the same *pistière*, in the same place, in the middle stall where he always goes so that people shan't see him." I can think of no one more beautiful, more noble or more youthful than a certain niece of Mme. de Guermantes. But I have heard the porter of a restaurant where I used sometimes to dine say as she went by: "Just look at that old trollop, what a style! And she

THE CAPTIVE

must be eighty, if she's a day." As far as age went, I find it difficult to believe that he meant what he said. But the pages clustered round him, who tittered whenever she went past the hotel on her way to visit, at their house in the neighbourhood, her charming great-aunts, Mmes. de Fezensac and de Bellery, saw upon the face of the young beauty the four-score years with which, seriously or in jest, the porter had endowed the "old trollop." You would have made them shriek with laughter had you told them that she was more distinguished than one of the two cashiers of the hotel, who, devoured by eczema, ridiculously stout, seemed to them a fine-looking woman. Perhaps sexual desire alone would have been capable of preventing their error from taking form, if it had been brought to bear upon the passage of the alleged old trollop, and if the pages had suddenly begun to covet the young goddess. But for reasons unknown, which were most probably of a social nature, this desire had not come into play. There is moreover ample room for discussion. The universe is true for us all and dissimilar to each of us. If we were not obliged, to preserve the continuity of our story, to confine ourselves to frivolous reasons, how many more serious reasons would permit us to demonstrate the falsehood and flimsiness of the opening pages of this volume in which, from my bed, I hear the world awake, now to one sort of weather, now to another. Yes, I have been forced to whittle down the facts, and to be a liar, but it is not one universe, there are millions, almost as many as the number of human eyes and brains in existence, that awake every morning.

To return to Albertine, I have never known any woman more amply endowed than herself with the happy aptitude

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

for a lie that is animated, coloured with the selfsame tints of life, unless it be one of her friends—one of my blossoming girls also, rose-pink as Albertine, but one whose irregular profile, concave in one place, then convex again, was exactly like certain clusters of pink flowers the name of which I have forgotten, but which have long and sinuous concavities. This girl was, from the point of view of story-telling, superior to Albertine, for she never introduced any of those painful moments, those furious innuendoes, which were frequent with my mistress. I have said, however, that she 'was charming when she invented a story which left no room for doubt, for one saw then in front of her the thing—albeit imaginary—which she was saying, using it as an illustration of her speech. Probability alone inspired Albertine, never the desire to make me jealous. For Albertine, without perhaps any material interest, liked people to be polite to her. And if in the course of this work I have had and shall have many occasions to shew how jealousy intensifies love, it is the lover's point of view that I have adopted. But if that lover be only the least bit proud, and though he were to die of a separation, he will not respond to a supposed betrayal with a courteous speech, he will turn away, or without going will order himself to assume a mask of coldness. And so it is entirely to her own disadvantage that his mistress makes him suffer so acutely. If, on the contrary, she dispels with a tactful word, with loving caresses, the suspicions that have been torturing him for all his show of indifference, no doubt the lover does not feel that despairing increase of love to which jealousy drives him, but ceasing in an instant to suffer, happy, affectionate, relieved from strain as one is after

THE CAPTIVE

a storm when the rain has ceased and one barely hears still splash at long intervals from the tall horse-chestnut trees the clinging drops which already the reappearing sun has dyed with colour, he does not know how to express his gratitude to her who has cured him. Albertine knew that I liked to reward her for her kindnesses, and this perhaps explained why she used to invent, to exculpate herself, confessions as natural as these stories the truth of which I never doubted, one of them being that of her meeting with Bergotte when he was already dead. Previously I had never known any of Albertine's lies save those that, at Balbec for instance, Françoise used to report to me, which I have omitted from these pages albeit they hurt me so sorely: "As she didn't want to come, she said to me: 'Couldn't you say to Monsieur that you didn't find me, that I had gone out?'" But our "inferiors", who love us as Françoise loved me, take pleasure in wounding us in our self-esteem.

CHAPTER II

The Verdurins quarrel with M. de Charlus

AFTER dinner, I told Albertine that, since I was out of bed, I might as well take the opportunity to go and see some of my friends, Mme. de Villeparisis, Mme. de Guermantes, the Cambremers, anyone in short whom I might find at home. I omitted to mention only the people whom I did intend to see, the Verdurins. I asked her if she would not come with me. She pleaded that she had no suitable clothes. "Besides, my hair is so awful. Do you really wish me to go on doing it like this?" And by way of farewell she held out her hand to me in that abrupt fashion, the arm outstretched, the shoulders thrust back, which she used to adopt on the beach at Balbec and had since then entirely abandoned. This forgotten gesture retransformed the body which it animated into that of the Albertine who as yet scarcely knew me. It restored to Albertine, ceremonious beneath an air of rudeness, her first novelty, her strangeness, even her setting. I saw the sea behind this girl whom I had never seen shake hands with me in this fashion since I was at the seaside. "My aunt thinks it makes me older," she added with a sullen air. "Oh that her aunt may be right!" thought I. "That Albertine by looking like a child should make Mme. Bontemps appear younger than she is, is all that her aunt would ask, and also that Albertine shall cost her nothing between now and the day when, by marrying me, she will repay what

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

has been spent on her." But that Albertine should appear less young, less pretty, should turn fewer heads in the street, that is what I, on the contrary, hoped. For the age of a duenna is less reassuring to a jealous lover than the age of the woman's face whom he loves. I regretted only that the style in which I had asked her to do her hair should appear to Albertine an additional bolt on the door of her prison. And it was henceforward this new domestic sentiment that never ceased, even when I was parted from Albertine, to form a bond attaching me to her.

I said to Albertine, who was not dressed, or so she told me, to accompany me to the Guermantes' or the Cambremers', that I could not be certain where I should go, and set off for the Verdurins'. At the moment when the thought of the concert that I was going to hear brought back to my mind the scene that afternoon: "*Grand pied de grue, grand pied de grue*,"—a scene of disappointed love, of jealous love perhaps, but if so as bestial as the scene to which a woman might be subjected by, so to speak, an orang-outang that was, if one may use the expression, in love with her—at the moment when, having reached the street, I was just going to hail a cab, I heard the sound of sobs which a man who was sitting upon a curbstone was endeavouring to stifle. I came nearer; the man, who had buried his face in his hands, appeared to be quite young, and I was surprised to see, from the gleam of white in the opening of his cloak, that he was wearing evening clothes and a white tie. As he heard my step he uncovered a face bathed in tears, but at once, having recognised me, turned away. It was Morel. He guessed that I had recognised him and,

THE CAPTIVE

checking his tears with an effort, told me that he had stopped to rest for a moment, he was in such pain. "I have grossly insulted, only to-day," he said, "a person for whom I had the very highest regard. It was a cowardly thing to do, for she loves me." "She will forget perhaps, as time goes on," I replied, without realising that by speaking thus I made it apparent that I had overheard the scene that afternoon. But he was so much absorbed in his own grief that it never even occurred to him that I might know something about the affair. "She may forget, perhaps," he said. "But I myself can never forget. I am too conscious of my degradation, I am disgusted with myself! However, what I have said I have said, and nothing can unsay it. When people make me lose my temper, I don't know what I am doing. And it is so bad for me, my nerves are all on edge," for, like all neurasthenics, he was keenly interested in his own health. If, during the afternoon, I had witnessed the amorous rage of an infuriated animal, this evening, within a few hours, centuries had elapsed and a fresh sentiment, a sentiment of shame, regret, grief, shewed that a great stage had been passed in the evolution of the beast destined to be transformed into a human being. Nevertheless, I still heard ringing in my ears his "*grand pied de grue*" and dreaded an imminent return to the savage state. I had only a very vague impression, however, of what had been happening, and this was but natural, for M. de Charlus himself was totally unaware that for some days past, and especially that day, even before the shameful episode which was not a direct consequence of the violinist's condition, Morel had been suffering from a recurrence of his neurasthenia. As a matter of

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

fact, he had, in the previous month, proceeded as rapidly as he had been able, a great deal less rapidly than he would have liked, towards the seduction of Jupien's niece with whom he was at liberty, now that they were engaged, to go out whenever he chose. But whenever he had gone a trifle far in his attempts at violation, and especially when he suggested to his betrothed that she might make friends with other girls whom she would then procure for himself, he had met with a resistance that made him furious. All at once (whether she would have proved too chaste, or on the contrary would have surrendered herself) his desire had subsided. He had decided to break with her, but feeling that the Baron, vicious as he might be, was far more moral than himself, he was afraid lest, in the event of a rupture, M. de Charlus might turn him out of the house. And so he had decided, a fortnight ago, that he would not see the girl again, would leave M. de Charlus and Jupien to clean up the mess (he employed a more realistic term) by themselves, and, before announcing the rupture, to "b—— off" to an unknown destination.

For all that his conduct towards Jupien's niece coincided exactly, in its minutest details, with the plan of conduct which he had outlined to the Baron as they were dining together at Saint-Mars-le-Vêtu, it is probable that his intention was entirely different, and that sentiments of a less atrocious nature, which he had not foreseen in his theory of conduct, had improved, had tinged it with sentiment in practice. The sole point in which, on the contrary, the practice was worse than the theory is this, that in theory it had not appeared to him possible that he could remain in Paris after such an act of betrayal.

THE CAPTIVE

Now, on the contrary, actually to "b—— off" for so small a matter seemed to him quite unnecessary. It meant leaving the Baron who would probably be furious, and forfeiting his own position. He would lose all the money that the Baron was now giving him. The thought that this was inevitable made his nerves give away altogether, he cried for hours on end, and in order not to think about it any more dosed himself cautiously with morphine. Then suddenly he hit upon an idea which no doubt had gradually been taking shape in his mind and gaining strength there for some time, and this was that a rupture with the girl would not inevitably mean a complete break with M. de Charlus. To lose all the Baron's money was a serious thing in itself. Morel in his uncertainty remained for some days a prey to dark thoughts, such as came to him at the sight of Bloch. Then he decided that Jupien and his niece had been trying to set a trap for him, that they might consider themselves lucky to be rid of him so cheaply. He found in short that the girl had been in the wrong in being so clumsy, in not having managed to keep him attached to her by a sensual attraction. Not only did the sacrifice of his position with M. de Charlus seem to him absurd, he even regretted the expensive dinners he had given the girl since they became engaged, the exact cost of which he knew by heart, being a true son of the valet who used to bring his "book" every month for my uncle's inspection. For the word book, in the singular, which means a printed volume to humanity in general, loses that meaning among Royal Princes and servants. To the latter it means their housekeeping book, to the former the register in which we inscribe our names. (At Balbec one day

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

when the Princesse de Luxembourg told me that she had not brought a book with her, I was about to offer her *Le Pêcheur d'Islande* and *Tartarin de Tarascon*, when I realised that she had meant not that she would pass the time less agreeably, but that I should find it more difficult to pay a call upon her.)

Notwithstanding the change in Morel's point of view with regard to the consequences of his behaviour, albeit that behaviour would have seemed to him abominable two months earlier, when he was passionately in love with Jupien's niece, whereas during the last fortnight he had never ceased to assure himself that the same behaviour was natural, praiseworthy, it continued to intensify the state of nervous unrest in which, finally, he had announced the rupture that afternoon. And he was quite prepared to vent his anger, if not (save in a momentary outburst) upon the girl, for whom he still felt that lingering fear, the last trace of love, at any rate upon the Baron. He took care, however, not to say anything to him before dinner, for, valuing his own professional skill above everything, whenever he had any difficult music to play (as this evening at the Verdurins') he avoided (as far as possible, and the scene that afternoon was already more than ample) anything that might impair the flexibility of his wrists. Similarly a surgeon who is an enthusiastic motorist, does not drive when he has an operation to perform. This accounts to me for the fact that, while he was speaking to me, he kept bending his fingers gently one after another to see whether they had regained their suppleness. A slight frown seemed to indicate that there was still a trace of nervous stiffness. But, so as not to increase it, he relaxed his features, as we forbid

THE CAPTIVE

ourself to grow irritated at not being able to sleep or to prevail upon a woman, for fear lest our rage itself may retard the moment of sleep or of satisfaction. And so, anxious to regain his serenity so that he might, as was his habit, absorb himself entirely in what he was going to play at the Verdurins', and anxious, so long as I was watching him, to let me see how unhappy he was, he decided that the simplest course was to beg me to leave him immediately. His request was superfluous, and it was a relief to me to get away from him. I had trembled lest, as we were due at the same house, within a few minutes, he might ask me to take him with me, my memory of the scene that afternoon being too vivid not to give me a certain distaste for the idea of having Morel by my side during the drive. It is quite possible that the love, and afterwards the indifference or hatred felt by Morel for Jupien's niece had been sincere. Unfortunately, it was not the first time that he had behaved thus, that he had suddenly "dropped" a girl to whom he had sworn undying love, going so far as to produce a loaded revolver, telling her that he would blow out his brains if ever he was mean enough to desert her. He did nevertheless desert her in time, and felt instead of remorse, a sort of rancour against her. It was not the first time that he had behaved thus, it was not to be the last, with the result that the heads of many girls—girls less forgetful of him than he was of them—suffered—as Jupien's niece's head continued long afterwards to suffer, still in love with Morel although she despised him—suffered, ready to burst with the shooting of an internal pain because in each of them—like a fragment of a Greek carving—an aspect of Morel's face, hard as marble and beautiful as

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

an antique sculpture, was embedded in her brain, with his blossoming hair, his fine eyes, his straight nose, forming a protuberance in a cranium not shaped to receive it, upon which no operation was possible. But in the fulness of time these stony fragments end by slipping into a place where they cause no undue discomfort, from which they never stir again; we are no longer conscious of their presence: I mean forgetfulness, or an indifferent memory.

Meanwhile I had gained two things in the course of the day. On the one hand, thanks to the calm that was produced in me by Albertine's docility, I found it possible, and therefore made up my mind, to break with her. There was on the other hand, the fruit of my reflexions during the interval that I had spent waiting for her, at the piano, the idea that Art, to which I would try to devote my reconquered liberty, was not a thing that justified one in making a sacrifice, a thing above and beyond life, that did not share in its fatuity and futility; the appearance of real individuality obtained in works of art being due merely to the illusion created by the artist's technical skill. If my afternoon had left behind it other deposits, possibly more profound, they were not to come to my knowledge until much later. As for the two which I was able thus to weigh, they were not to be permanent; for, from this very evening my ideas about art were to rise above the depression to which they had been subjected in the afternoon, while on the other hand my calm, and consequently the freedom that would enable me to devote myself to it, was once again to be withdrawn from me.

As my cab, following the line of the embankment, was coming near the Verdurins' house, I made the driver pull

THE CAPTIVE

up. I had just seen Brichot alighting from the tram at the foot of the Rue Bonaparte, after which he dusted his shoes with an old newspaper and put on a pair of pearl grey gloves. I went up to him on foot. For some time past, his sight having grown steadily weaker, he had been endowed—as richly as an observatory—with new spectacles of a powerful and complicated kind, which, like astronomical instruments, seemed to be screwed into his eyes; he focussed their exaggerated blaze upon myself and recognised me. They—the spectacles—were in marvellous condition. But behind them I could see, minute, pallid, convulsive, expiring, a remote gaze placed under this powerful apparatus, as, in a laboratory equipped out of all proportion to the work that is done in it, you may watch the last throes of some insignificant animalcule through the latest and most perfect type of microscope. I offered him my arm to guide him on his way. “This time it is not by great Cherbourg that we meet,” he said to me, “but by little Dunkerque,” a remark which I found extremely tiresome, as I failed to understand what he meant; and yet I dared not ask Brichot, dreading not so much his scorn as his explanations. I replied that I was longing to see the room in which Swann used to meet Odette every evening. “What, so you know that old story, do you?” he said. “And yet from those days to the death of Swann is what the poet rightly calls: ‘*Grande spatium mortalis aevi.*’”

The death of Swann had been a crushing blow to me at the time. The death of Swann! Swann, in this phrase, is something more than a noun in the possessive case. I mean by it his own particular death, the death allotted by destiny to the service of Swann. For we talk

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

of "death" for convenience, but there are almost as many different deaths as there are people. We are not equipped with a sense that would enable us to see, moving at every speed in every direction, these deaths, the active deaths aimed by destiny at this person or that. Often there are deaths that will not be entirely relieved of their duties until two or even three years later. They come in haste to plant a tumour in the side of a Swann, then depart to attend to their other duties, returning only when, the surgeons having performed their operation, it is necessary to plant the tumour there afresh. Then comes the moment when we read in the *Gaulois* that Swann's health has been causing anxiety but that he is now making an excellent recovery. Then, a few minutes before the breath leaves our body, death, like a sister of charity who has come to nurse, rather than to destroy us, enters to preside over our last moments, crowns with a supreme halo the cold and stiffening creature whose heart has ceased to beat. And it is this diversity among deaths, the mystery of their circuits, the colour of their fatal badge, that makes so impressive a paragraph in the newspapers such as this:

"We regret to learn that M. Charles Swann passed away yesterday at his residence in Paris, after a long and painful illness. A Parisian whose intellectual gifts were widely appreciated, a discriminating but steadfastly loyal friend, he will be universally regretted, in those literary and artistic circles where the soundness and refinement of his taste made him a willing and a welcome guest, as well as at the Jockey Club of which he was one of the oldest and most respected members. He belonged also to the Union and Agricole. He had recently resigned his

THE CAPTIVE

membership of the Rue Royale. His personal appearance and eminently distinguished bearing never failed to arouse public interest at all the great events of the musical and artistic seasons, especially at private views, at which he was a regular attendant until, during the last years of his life, he became almost entirely confined to the house. The funeral will take place, etc."

From this point of view, if one is not "somebody," the absence of a well known title makes the process of decomposition even more rapid. No doubt it is more or less anonymously, without any personal identity, that a man still remains Duc d'Uzès. But the ducal coronet does for some time hold the elements together, as their moulds keep together those artistically designed ices which Albertine admired, whereas the names of ultra-fashionable commoners, as soon as they are dead, dissolve and lose their shape. We have seen M. de Bréauté speak of Cartier as the most intimate friend of the Duc de La Trémoille, as a man greatly in demand in aristocratic circles. To a later generation, Cartier has become something so formless that it would almost be adding to his importance to make him out as related to the jeweller Cartier, with whom he would have smiled to think that anybody could be so ignorant as to confuse him! Swann on the contrary was a remarkable personality, in both the intellectual and the artistic worlds; and even although he had "produced" nothing, still he had a chance of surviving a little longer. And yet, my dear Charles —, whom I used to know when I was still so young and you were nearing your grave, it is because he whom you must have regarded as a little fool has made you the hero of one of his volumes that people are beginning to speak of

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

you again and that your name will perhaps live. If in Tissot's picture representing the balcony of the Rue Royale club, where you figure with Gallifet, Edmond Polignac and Saint-Maurice, people are always drawing attention to yourself, it is because they know that there are some traces of you in the character of Swann.

To return to more general realities, it was of this foretold and yet unforeseen death of Swann that I had heard him speak himself to the Duchesse de Guermantes, on the evening of her cousin's party. It was the same death whose striking and specific strangeness had recurred to me one evening when, as I ran my eye over the newspaper, my attention was suddenly arrested by the announcement of it, as though traced in mysterious lines interpolated there out of place. They had sufficed to make of a living man some one who can never again respond to what you say to him, to reduce him to a mere name, a written name, that has passed in a moment from the real world to the realm of silence. It was they that even now made me anxious to make myself familiar with the house in which the Verdurins had lived, and where Swann, who at that time was not merely a row of five letters printed in a newspaper, had dined so often with Odette. I must add also (and this is what for a long time made Swann's death more painful than any other, albeit these reasons bore no relation to the individual strangeness of his death) that I had never gone to see Gilberte, as I promised him at the Princesse de Guermantes's, that he had never told me what the "other reason" was, to which he alluded that evening, for his selecting me as the recipient of his conversation with the Prince, that a thousand questions occurred to me (as

THE CAPTIVE

bubbles rise from the bottom of a pond) which I longed to ask him about the most different subjects: Vermeer, M. de Mouchy, Swann himself, a Boucher tapestry, Combray, questions that doubtless were not very vital since I had put off asking them from day to day, but which seemed to me of capital importance now that, his lips being sealed, no answer would ever come.

"No," Brichot went on, "it was not here that Swann met his future wife, or rather it was here only in the very latest period, after the disaster that partially destroyed Mme. Verdurin's former home."

Unfortunately, in my fear of displaying before the eyes of Brichot an extravagance which seemed to me out of place, since the professor had no share in its enjoyment, I had alighted too hastily from the carriage and the driver had not understood the words I had flung at him over my shoulder in order that I might be well clear of the carriage before Brichot caught sight of me. The consequence was that the driver followed us and asked me whether he was to call for me later; I answered hurriedly in the affirmative, and was regarded with a vastly increased respect by the professor who had come by omnibus.

"Ah! So you were in a carriage," he said in solemn tones. "Only by the purest accident. I never take one as a rule. I always travel by omnibus or on foot. However, it may perhaps entitle me to the great honour of taking you home to-night if you will oblige me by consenting to enter that rattle-trap; we shall be packed rather tight. But you are always so considerate to me." Alas, in making him this offer, I am depriving myself of nothing (I reflected) since in any case I shall be obliged to go

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

home for Albertine's sake. Her presence in my house, at an hour when nobody could possibly call to see her, allowed me to dispose as freely of my time as I had that afternoon, when, seated at the piano, I knew that she was on her way back from the Trocadéro and that I was in no hurry to see her again. But furthermore, as also in the afternoon, I felt that I had a woman in the house and that on returning home I should not taste the fortifying thrill of solitude. "I accept with great good will," replied Brichot. "At the period to which you allude, our friends occupied in the Rue Montalivet a magnificent ground floor apartment with an upper landing, and a garden behind, less sumptuous of course, and yet to my mind preferable to the old Venetian Embassy." Brichot informed me that this evening there was to be at "Quai Conti" (thus it was that the faithful spoke of the Verdurin drawing-room since it had been transferred to that address) a great musical "tow-row-row" got up by M. de Charlus. He went on to say that in the old days to which I had referred, the little nucleus had been different, and its tone not at all the same, not only because the faithful had then been younger. He told me of elaborate jokes played by Elstir (what he called "pure buffooneries"), as for instance one day when the painter, having pretended to fail at the last moment, had come disguised as an extra waiter and, as he handed round the dishes, whispered gallant speeches in the ear of the extremely proper Baroness Putbus, crimson with anger and alarm; then disappearing before the end of dinner he had had a hip-bath carried into the drawing-room, out of which, when the party left the table, he had emerged stark naked uttering fearful oaths; and also of supper parties to which

THE CAPTIVE

the guests came in paper costumes, designed, cut out and coloured by Elstir, which were masterpieces in themselves, Brichot having worn on one occasion that of a great nobleman of the court of Charles VII, with long turned-up points to his shoes, and another time that of Napoleon I, for which Elstir had fashioned a Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honour out of sealing-wax. In short Brichot, seeing again with the eyes of memory the drawing-room of those days with its high windows, its low sofas devoured by the midday sun which had had to be replaced, declared that he preferred it to the drawing-room of to-day. Of course, I quite understood that by "drawing-room" Brichot meant—as the word church implies not merely the religious edifice but the congregation of worshippers—not merely the apartment, but the people who visited it, the special pleasures that they came to enjoy there, to which, in his memory, those sofas had imparted their form upon which, when you called to see Mme. Verdurin in the afternoon, you waited until she was ready, while the blossom on the horse chestnuts outside, and on the mantelpiece carnations in vases seemed, with a charming and kindly thought for the visitor expressed in the smiling welcome of their rosy hues, to be watching anxiously for the tardy appearance of the lady of the house. But if the drawing-room seemed to him superior to what it was now, it was perhaps because our mind is the old Proteus who cannot remain the slave of any one shape and, even in the social world, suddenly abandons a house which has slowly and with difficulty risen to the pitch of perfection to prefer another which is less brilliant, just as the "touched-up" photographs which Odette had had taken at Otto's, in which she queened it

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

in a "princess" gown, her hair waved by Lenthéric, did not appeal to Swann so much as a little "cabinet picture" taken at Nice, in which, in a cloth cape, her loosely dressed hair protruding beneath a straw hat trimmed with pansies and a bow of black ribbon, instead of being twenty years younger (for women as a rule look all the older in a photograph, the earlier it is), she looked like a little servant girl twenty years older than she now was. Perhaps too he derived some pleasure from praising to me what I myself had never known, from shewing me that he had tasted delights that I could never enjoy. If so, he was successful, for merely by mentioning the names of two or three people who were no longer alive and to each of whom he imparted something mysterious by his way of referring to them, to that delicious intimacy, he made me ask myself what it could have been like; I felt that everything that had been told me about the Verdurins was far too coarse; and indeed, in the case of Swann whom I had known, I reproached myself with not having paid him sufficient attention, with not having paid attention to him in a sufficiently disinterested spirit, with not having listened to him properly when he used to entertain me while we waited for his wife to come home for luncheon and he shewed me his treasures, now that I knew that he was to be classed with the most brilliant talkers of the past. Just as we were coming to Mme. Verdurin's doorstep, I caught sight of M. de Charlus, steering towards us the bulk of his huge body, drawing unwillingly in his wake one of those blackmailers or mendicants who nowadays, whenever he appeared, sprang up without fail even in what were to all appearance the most deserted corners, by whom this powerful monster

THE CAPTIVE

was, evidently against his will, invariably escorted, although at a certain distance, as is the shark by its pilot, in short contrasting so markedly with the haughty stranger of my first visit to Balbec, with his stern aspect, his affectation of virility, that I seemed to be discovering, accompanied by its satellite, a planet at a wholly different period of its revolution, when one begins to see it full, or a sick man now devoured by the malady which a few years ago was but a tiny spot which was easily concealed and the gravity of which was never suspected. Although the operation that Brichot had undergone had restored a tiny portion of the sight which he had thought to be lost for ever, I do not think he had observed the ruffian following in the Baron's steps. Not that this mattered, for, ever since La Raspelière, and notwithstanding the professor's friendly regard for M. de Charlus, the sight of the latter always made him feel ill at ease. No doubt to every man the life of every other extends along shadowy paths which he does not suspect. Falsehood, however, so often treacherous, upon which all conversation is based, conceals less perfectly a feeling of hostility, or of sordid interest, or a visit which we wish to look as though we had not paid, or an escapade with the mistress of a day which we are anxious to keep from our wife, than a good reputation covers up—so as not to let their existence be guessed—evil habits. They may remain unknown to us for a lifetime; an accidental encounter upon a pier, at night, will disclose them; even then this accidental discovery is frequently misunderstood and we require a third person, who is in the secret, to supply the unimaginable clue of which everyone is unaware. But, once we know about them, they alarm us because we feel that that way

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

madness lies, far more than by their immorality. Mme. de Surgis did not possess the slightest trace of any moral feeling, and would have admitted anything of her sons that could be degraded and explained by material interest, which is comprehensible to all mankind! But she forbade them to go on visiting M. de Charlus when she learned that, by a sort of internal clockwork, he was inevitably drawn upon each of their visits, to pinch their chins and to make each of them pinch his brother's. She felt that uneasy sense of a physical mystery which makes us ask ourself whether the neighbour with whom we have been on friendly terms is not tainted with cannibalism, and to the Baron's repeated inquiry: "When am I going to see your sons again?" she would reply, conscious of the thunderbolts that she was attracting to her defenceless head, that they were very busy working for examinations, preparing to go abroad, and so forth. Irresponsibility aggravates faults, and even crimes, whatever anyone may say. Landru (assuming that he really did kill his wives) if he did so from a financial motive, which it is possible to resist, may be pardoned, but not if his crime was due to an irresistible Sadism.

PART II

CHAPTER II (CONTINUED)

B RICHOT'S coarse pleasantries, in the early days of his friendship with the Baron, had given place, as soon as it was a question, not of uttering common-places, but of understanding, to an awkward feeling which concealed a certain merriment. He reassured himself by recalling pages of Plato, lines of Virgil, because, being mentally as well as physically blind, he did not understand that in those days to fall in love with a young man was like, in our day (Socrates's jokes reveal this more clearly than Plato's theories), keeping a dancing girl before one marries and settles down. M. de Charlus himself would not have understood, he who confused his mania with friendship, which does not resemble it in the least, and the athletes of Praxiteles with obliging boxers. He refused to see that for the last nineteen hundred years ("a pious courtier under a pious prince would have been an atheist under an atheist prince," as La Bruyère reminds us) all conventional homosexuality—that of Plato's young friends as well as that of Virgil's shepherds—has disappeared, that what survives and increases is only the involuntary, the neurotic kind, which we conceal from other people and disguise to ourself. And M. de Charlus would have been wrong in not denying frankly the pagan genealogy. In exchange for a little plastic beauty, how vast the moral superiority! The shepherd in Theocritus who sighs for love of a boy, later on will have no reason to be less hard of heart, less dull of wit than the other

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

shepherd whose flute sounds for Amaryllis. For the former is not suffering from a malady, he is conforming to the customs of his time. It is the homosexuality that survives in spite of obstacles, a thing of scorn and loathing, that is the only true form, the only form that can be found conjoined in a person with an enhancement of his moral qualities. We are appalled at the apparently close relation between these and our bodily attributes, when we think of the slight dislocation of a purely physical taste, the slight blemish in one of the senses, which explain why the world of poets and musicians, so firmly barred against the Duc de Guermantes, opens its portals to M. de Charlus. That the latter should shew taste in the furnishing of his home, which is that of an eclectic housewife, need not surprise us; but the narrow loophole that opens upon Beethoven and Veronese! This does not exempt the sane from a feeling of alarm when a madman who has composed a sublime poem, after explaining to them in the most logical fashion that he has been shut up by mistake, through his wife's machinations, imploring them to intercede for him with the governor of the asylum, complaining of the promiscuous company that is forced upon him, concludes as follows: "You see that man who is waiting to speak to me on the lawn, whom I am obliged to put up with; he thinks that he is Jesus Christ. That alone will shew you the sort of lunatics that I have to live among; he cannot be Christ, for I am Christ myself!" A moment earlier, you were on the point of going to assure the governor that a mistake had been made. At this final speech, even if you bear in mind the admirable poem at which this same man is working every day, you shrink from him, as Mme. de Surgis's sons shrank from M. de

THE CAPTIVE

Charlus, not that he would have done them any harm, but because of his ceaseless invitations, the ultimate purpose of which was to pinch their chins. The poet is to be pitied, who must, with no Virgil to guide him, pass through the circles of an inferno of sulphur and brimstone, to cast himself into the fire that falls from heaven, in order to rescue a few of the inhabitants of Sodom! No charm in his work; the same severity in his life as in those of the unfrocked priests who follow the strictest rule of celibacy so that no one may be able to ascribe to anything but loss of faith their discarding of the cassock.

Making a pretence of not seeing the seedy individual who was following in his wake (whenever the Baron ventured into the Boulevards or crossed the waiting-room in Saint-Lazare station, these followers might be counted by the dozen who, in the hope of "touching him for a dollar," never let him out of their sight), and afraid at the same time that the other might have the audacity to accost him, the Baron had devoutly lowered his darkened eyelids which, in contrast to his rice-powdered cheeks, gave him the appearance of a Grand Inquisitor painted by El Greco. But this priestly expression caused alarm, and he looked like an unfrocked priest, various compromises to which he had been driven by the need to apologise for his taste and to keep it secret having had the effect of bringing to the surface of his face precisely what the Baron sought to conceal, a debauched life indicated by moral decay. This last, indeed, whatever be its cause, is easily detected, for it is never slow in taking bodily form and proliferates upon a face, especially on the cheeks and round the eyes, as physically as the ochreous yellows accumulate there in a case of jaundice or repulsive reds

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

in a case of skin disease. Nor was it merely in the cheeks, or rather the chaps of this painted face, in the mammiferous chest, the aggressive rump of this body allowed to deteriorate and invaded by obesity, upon which there now floated iridescent as a film of oil, the vice at one time so jealously confined by M. de Charlus in the most secret chamber of his heart. Now it overflowed in all his speech.

"So this is how you prowl the streets at night, Brichot, with a good-looking young man," he said as he joined us, while the disappointed ruffian made off. "A fine example. We must tell your young pupils at the Sorbonne that this is how you behave. But, I must say, the society of youth seems to be good for you, Monsieur le Professeur, you are as fresh as a rosebud. I have interrupted you, you looked as though you were enjoying yourselves like a pair of giddy girls, and had no need of an old Granny Killjoy like myself. I shan't take it to the confessional, since you are almost at your destination." The Baron's mood was all the more blithe since he knew nothing whatever about the scene that afternoon, Jupien having decided that it was better to protect his niece against a repetition of the onslaught than to inform M. de Charlus. And so the Baron was still looking forward to the marriage, and delighting in the thought of it. One would suppose that it is a consolation to these great solitaries to give their tragic celibacy the relief of a fictitious fatherhood. "But, upon my word, Brichot," he went on, turning with a laugh to gaze at us, "I feel quite awkward when I see you in such gallant company. You were like a pair of lovers. Going along arm in arm, I say, Brichot, you do go the pace!" Ought one to

THE CAPTIVE

ascribe this speech to the senility of a particular state of mind, less capable than in the past of controlling its reflexes, which in moments of automatism lets out a secret that has been so carefully hidden for forty years? Or rather to that contempt for plebeian opinion which all the Guermantes felt in their hearts, and of which M. de Charlus's brother, the Duke, was displaying a variant form when, regardless of the fact that my mother could see him, he used to shave standing by his bedroom window in his unbuttoned nightshirt. Had M. de Charlus contracted, during the roasting journeys between Doncières and Douville, the dangerous habit of making himself at ease, and, just as he would push back his straw hat in order to cool his huge forehead, of unfastening—at first, for a few moments only—the mask that for too long had been rigorously imposed upon his true face? His conjugal attitude towards Morel might well have astonished anyone who had observed it in its full extent. But M. de Charlus had reached the stage when the monotony of the pleasures that his vice has to offer became wearying. He had sought instinctively for novel displays, and, growing tired of the strangers whom he picked up, had passed to the opposite pole, to what he used to imagine that he would always loathe, the imitation of family life, or of fatherhood. Sometimes even this did not suffice him, he required novelty, and would go and spend the night with a woman, just as a normal man may, once in his life, have wished to go to bed with a boy, from a curiosity similar though inverse, and in either case equally unhealthy. The Baron's existence as one of the "faithful," living, for Charlie's sake, entirely among the little clan, had had, in stultifying the efforts

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

that he had been making for years to keep up lying appearances, the same influence that a voyage of exploration or residence in the colonies has upon certain Europeans who discard the ruling principles by which they were guided at home. And yet, the internal revolution of a mind, ignorant at first of the anomaly contained in its body, then appalled at it after the discovery, and finally growing so used to it as to fail to perceive that it is not safe to confess to other people what the sinner has come in time to confess without shame to himself, had been even more effective in liberating M. de Charlus from the last vestiges of social constraint than the time that he spent at the Verdurins'. No banishment, indeed, to the South Pole, or to the summit of Mont Blanc, can separate us so entirely from our fellow creatures as a prolonged residence in the seclusion of a secret vice, that is to say of a state of mind that is different from theirs. A vice (so M. de Charlus used at one time to style it) to which the Baron now gave the genial aspect of a mere failing, extremely common, attractive on the whole and almost amusing, like laziness, absent-mindedness or greed. Conscious of the curiosity that his own striking personality aroused, M. de Charlus derived a certain pleasure from satisfying, whetting, sustaining it. Just as a Jewish journalist will come forward day after day as the champion of Catholicism, not, probably, with any hope of being taken seriously, but simply in order not to disappoint the good-natured amusement of his readers, M. de Charlus would genially denounce evil habits among the little clan, as he would have mimicked a person speaking English or imitated Mounet-Sully, without waiting to be asked, so as to pay his scot with a good grace, by displaying an

THE CAPTIVE

amateur talent in society; so that M. de Charlus now threatened Brichot that he would report to the Sorbonne that he was in the habit of walking about with young men, exactly as the circumcised scribe keeps referring in and out of season to the "Eldest Daughter of the Church" and the "Sacred Heart of Jesus," that is to say without the least trace of hypocrisy, but with a distinctly histrionic effect. It was not only the change in the words themselves, so different from those that he allowed himself to use in the past, that seemed to require some explanation, there was also the change that had occurred in his intonations, his gestures, all of which now singularly resembled the type M. de Charlus used most fiercely to castigate; he would now utter unconsciously almost the same little cries (unconscious in him, and all the more deep-rooted) as are uttered consciously by the invert who refer to one another as "she"; as though this deliberate "camping", against which M. de Charlus had for so long set his face, were after all merely a brilliant and faithful imitation of the manner that men of the Charlus type, whatever they may say, are compelled to adopt when they have reached a certain stage in their malady, just as sufferers from general paralysis or locomotor ataxia inevitably end by displaying certain symptoms. As a matter of fact—and this is what this purely unconscious "camping" revealed—the difference between the stern Charlus, dressed all in black, with his stiffly brushed hair, whom I had known, and the painted young men, loaded with rings, was no more than the purely imaginary difference that exists between an excited person who talks fast, keeps moving all the time, and a neurotic who talks slowly, preserves a perpetual phlegm, but

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

is tainted with the same neurasthenia in the eyes of the physician who knows that each of the two is devoured by the same anguish and marred by the same defects. At the same time one could tell that M. de Charlus had aged from wholly different signs, such as the extraordinary frequency in his conversation of certain expressions that had taken root in it and used now to crop up at every moment (for instance: "the chain of circumstances") upon which the Baron's speech leaned in sentence after sentence as upon a necessary prop. "Is Charlie here yet?" Brichot asked M. de Charlus as we came in sight of the door. "Oh, I don't know," said the Baron, raising his arms and half-shutting his eyes with the air of a person who does not wish anyone to accuse him of being indiscreet, all the more so as he had probably been reproached by Morel for things which he had said and which the other, as timorous as he was vain, and as ready to deny M. de Charlus as he was to boast of his friendship, had considered serious albeit they were quite unimportant. "You know, he never tells me what he's going to do." If the conversations of two people bound by a tie of intimacy are full of falsehood, this occurs no less spontaneously in the conversations that a third person holds with a lover on the subject of the person with whom the latter is in love, whatever be the sex of that person.

"Have you seen him lately?" I asked M. de Charlus, with the object of seeming at once not to be afraid of mentioning Morel to him and not to believe that they were actually living together. "He came in, as it happened, for five minutes this morning while I was still half asleep, and sat down on the side of my bed, as though he

THE CAPTIVE

wanted to ravish me." I guessed at once that M. de Charlus had seen Charlie within the last hour, for if we ask a woman when she last saw the man whom we know to be—and whom she may perhaps suppose that we suspect of being—her lover, if she has just taken tea with him, she replies: "I saw him for an instant before luncheon." Between these two incidents the only difference is that one is false and the other true, but both are equally innocent, or, if you prefer it, equally culpable. And so we should be unable to understand why the mistress (in this case, M. de Charlus) always chooses the false version, did we not know that such replies are determined, unknown to the person who utters them, by a number of factors which appear so out of proportion to the triviality of the incident that we do not take the trouble to consider them. But to a physicist the space occupied by the tiniest ball of pith is explained by the harmony of action, the conflict or equilibrium, of laws of attraction or repulsion which govern far greater worlds. Just as many different laws acting in opposite directions dictate the more general responses with regard to the innocence, the "platonism," or on the contrary the carnal reality of the relations that one has with the person whom one says one saw in the morning when one has seen him or her in the evening. Here we need merely record, without pausing to consider them, the desire to appear natural and fearless, the instinctive impulse to conceal a secret assignation, a blend of modesty and ostentation, the need to confess what one finds so delightful and to shew that one is loved, a divination of what the other person knows or guesses—but does not say—a divination which, exceeding or falling short of the other person's,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

makes one now exaggerate, now under-estimate it, the spontaneous longing to play with fire and the determination to rescue something from the blaze. At the same time, speaking generally, let us say that M. de Charlus, notwithstanding the aggravation of his malady which perpetually urged him to reveal, to insinuate, sometimes boldly to invent compromising details, did intend, during this period in his life, to make it known that Charlie was not a man of the same sort as himself and that they were friends and nothing more. This did not prevent him (even though it may quite possibly have been true) from contradicting himself at times (as with regard to the hour at which they had last met), whether he forgot himself at such moments and told the truth, or invented a lie, boastingly or from a sentimental affectation or because he thought it amusing to baffle his questioner. "You know that he is to me," the Baron went on, "the best of comrades, for whom I have the greatest affection, as I am certain" (was he uncertain of it, then, that he felt the need to say that he was certain?) "he has for me, but there is nothing at all between us, nothing of that sort, you understand, nothing of that sort," said the Baron, as naturally as though he had been speaking of a woman. "Yes, he came in this morning to pull me out of bed. Though he knows that I hate anybody to see me in bed. You don't mind? Oh, it's horrible, it's so disturbing, one looks so perfectly hideous, of course I'm no longer five-and-twenty, they won't choose me to be Queen of the May, still one does like to feel that one is looking one's best."

It is possible that the Baron was in earnest when he spoke of Morel as a good comrade, and that he was being

THE CAPTIVE

even more truthful than he supposed when he said: "I never know what he's doing; he tells me nothing about his life."

Indeed we may mention (interrupting for a few moments our narrative, which shall be resumed immediately after the closure of this parenthesis which opens at the moment when M. de Charlus, Brichot and myself are arriving at Mme. Verdurin's front door), we may mention that shortly before this evening the Baron had been plunged in grief and stupefaction by a letter which he had opened by mistake and which was addressed to Morel. This letter, which by a repercussion was to cause intense misery to myself also, was written by the actress Léa, notorious for her exclusive interest in women. And yet her letter to Morel (whom M. de Charlus had never suspected of knowing her, even) was written in the most impassioned tone. Its indelicacy prevents us from reproducing it here, but we may mention that Léa addressed him throughout in the feminine gender, with such expressions as: "Go on, you bad woman!" or "Of course you are so, my pretty, you know you are." And in this letter reference was made to various other women who seemed to be no less Morel's friends than Léa's. On the other hand, Morel's sarcasm at the Baron's expense and Léa's at that of an officer who was keeping her, and of whom she said: "He keeps writing me letters begging me to be careful! What do you say to that, my little white puss," revealed to M. de Charlus a state of things no less unsuspected by him than were Morel's peculiar and intimate relations with Léa. What most disturbed the Baron was the word "so." Ignorant at first of its application, he had eventually, at a time already remote

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

in the past, learned that he himself was "so." And now the notion that he had acquired of this word was again put to the challenge. When he had discovered that he was "so," he had supposed this to mean that his tastes, as Saint-Simon says, did not lie in the direction of women. And here was this word "so" applied to Morel with an extension of meaning of which M. de Charlus was unaware, so much so that Morel gave proof, according to this letter, of his being "so" by having the same taste as certain women for other women. From that moment the Baron's jealousy had no longer any reason to confine itself to the men of Morel's acquaintance, but began to extend to the women also. So that the people who were "so" were not merely those that he had supposed to be "so," but a whole and vast section of the inhabitants of the planet, consisting of women as well as of men, loving not merely men but women also, and the Baron, in the face of this novel meaning of a word that was so familiar to him, felt himself tormented by an anxiety of the mind as well as of the heart, born of this twofold mystery which combined an extension of the field of his jealousy with the sudden inadequacy of a definition.

M. de Charlus had never in his life been anything but an amateur. That is to say, incidents of this sort could never be of any use to him. He worked off the painful impression that they might make upon him in violent scenes in which he was a past-master of eloquence, or in crafty intrigues. But to a person endowed with the qualities of a Bergotte, for instance, they might have been of inestimable value. This may indeed explain, to a certain extent (since we have to grope blindfold, but choose, like the lower animals, the herb that is good for

THE CAPTIVE

us), why men like Bergotté have generally lived in the company of persons who were ordinary, false and malicious. Their beauty is sufficient for the writer's imagination, enhances his generosity, but does not in any way alter the nature of his companion, whose life, situated thousands of feet below the level of his own, her incredible stories, her lies carried farther, and, what is more, in another direction than what might have been expected, appear in occasional flashes. The lie, the perfect lie, about people whom we know, about the relations that we have had with them, about our motive for some action, a motive which we express in totally different terms, the lie as to what we are, whom we love, what we feel with regard to the person who loves us and believes that she has fashioned us in her own image because she keeps on kissing us morning, noon and night, that lie is one of the only things in the world that can open a window for us upon what is novel, unknown, that can awaken in us sleeping senses to the contemplation of universes that otherwise we should never have known. We are bound to say, in so far as M. de Charlus is concerned, that, if he was stupefied to learn with regard to Morel a certain number of things which the latter had carefully concealed from him, he was not justified in concluding from this that it was a mistake to associate too closely with the lower orders. We shall indeed see, in the concluding section of this work, M. de Charlus himself engaged in doing things which would have stupefied the members of his family and his friends far more than he could possibly have been stupefied by the revelations of Léa. (The revelation that he had found most painful had been that of a tour which Morel had made with Léa,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

whereas at the time he had assured M. de Charlus that he was studying music in Germany. He had found support for this falsehood in obliging friends in Germany to whom he had sent his letters, to be forwarded from there to M. de Charlus, who, as it happened, was so positive that Morel was there that he had not even looked at the postmark.) But it is time to rejoin the Baron as he advances with Brichot and myself towards the Verdurins' door.

"And what," he went on, turning to myself, "has become of your young Hebrew friend, whom we met at Douville? It occurred to me that, if you liked, one might perhaps invite him to the house one evening." For M. de Charlus, who did not shrink from employing a private detective to spy upon every word and action of Morel, for all the world like a husband or a lover, had not ceased to pay attention to other young men. The vigilance which he made one of his old servants maintain, through an agency, upon Morel, was so indiscreet that his footmen thought they were being watched, and one of the housemaids could not endure the suspense, never ventured into the street, always expecting to find a policeman at her heels. "She can do whatever she likes! It would be a waste of time and money to follow her! As if her goings on mattered to us!" the old servant ironically exclaimed, for he was so passionately devoted to his master that, albeit he in no way shared the Baron's tastes, he had come in time, with such ardour did he employ himself in their service, to speak of them as though they were his own. "He is the very best of good fellows," M. de Charlus would say of this old servant, for we never appreciate anyone so much as those who combine with

THE CAPTIVE

other great virtues that of placing themselves unconditionally at the disposal of our vices. It was moreover of men alone that M. de Charlus was capable of feeling any jealousy so far as Morel was concerned. Women inspired in him no jealousy whatever. This is indeed an almost universal rule with the Charlus type. The love of the man with whom they are in love for a woman is something different, which occurs in another animal species (a lion does not interfere with tigers); does not distress them; if anything, reassures them. Sometimes, it is true, in the case of those who exalt their inversion to the level of a priesthood, this love creates disgust. These men resent their friends' having succumbed to it, not as a betrayal but as a lapse from virtue. A Charlus, of a different variety from the Baron, would have been as indignant at the discovery of Morel's relations with a woman as upon reading in a newspaper that he, the interpreter of Bach and Händel, was going to play Puccini. It is, by the way, for this reason that the young men who, with an eye to their own personal advantage, condescend to the love of men like Charlus assure them that women inspire them only with disgust, just as they would tell a doctor that they never touch alcohol, and care only for spring water. But M. de Charlus, in this respect, departed to some extent from the general rule. Since he admired everything about Morel, the latter's successes with women caused him no annoyance, gave him the same joy as his successes on the platform, or at écarté. "But do you know, my dear fellow, he has women," he would say, with an air of disclosure, of scandal, possibly of envy, above all of admiration. "He is extraordinary," he would continue; "Everywhere, the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

most famous whores can look at nobody but him. They stare at him everywhere, whether it's on the underground or in the theatre. It's becoming a nuisance! I can't go out with him to a restaurant without the waiter bringing him notes from at least three women. And always pretty women too. Not that there's anything surprising in that. I was watching him yesterday, I can quite understand it, he has become so beautiful, he looks just like a Bronzino, he is really marvellous." But M. de Charlus liked to shew that he was in love with Morel, to persuade other people, possibly to persuade himself, that Morel was in love with him. He applied to the purpose of having Morel always with him (notwithstanding the harm that the young fellow might do to the Baron's social position) a sort of self-esteem. For (and this is frequent among men of good position, who are snobs, and, in their vanity, sever all their social ties in order to be seen everywhere with a mistress, a person of doubtful or a lady of tarnished reputation, whom nobody will invite, and with whom nevertheless it seems to them flattering to be associated) he had arrived at that stage at which self-esteem devotes all its energy to destroying the goals to which it has attained, whether because, under the influence of love, a man finds a prestige which he is alone in perceiving in ostentatious relations with the beloved object, or because, by the waning of social ambitions that have been gratified, and the rising of a tide of subsidiary curiosities all the more absorbing the more platonic they are, the latter have not only reached but have passed the level at which the former found it difficult to remain.

As for young men in general, M. de Charlus found that to his fondness for them Morel's existence was not an

THE CAPTIVE

obstacle, and that indeed his brilliant reputation as a violinist or his growing fame as a composer and journalist might in certain instances prove an attraction. Did anyone introduce to the Baron a young composer of an agreeable type, it was in Morel's talents that he sought an opportunity of doing the stranger a favour. "You must," he would tell him, "bring me some of your work so that Morel can play it at a concert or on tour. There is hardly any decent music written, now, for the violin. It is a godsend to find anything new. And abroad they appreciate that sort of thing enormously. Even in the provinces there are little musical societies where they love music with a fervour and intelligence that are quite admirable." Without any greater sincerity (for all this could serve only as a bait and it was seldom that Morel condescended to fulfil these promises), Bloch having confessed that he was something of a poet (when he was "in the mood", he had added with the sarcastic laugh with which he would accompany a platitude, when he could think of nothing original), M. de Charlus said to me: "You must tell your young Israelite, since he writes verses, that he must really bring me some for Morel. For a composer, that is always the stumbling block, to find something decent to set to music. One might even consider a libretto. It would not be without interest, and would acquire a certain value from the distinction of the poet, from my patronage, from a whole chain of auxiliary circumstances, among which Morel's talent would take the chief place, for he is composing a lot just now, and writing too, and very pleasantly, I must talk to you about it. As for his talent as a performer (there, as you know, he is already a past-master), you shall see this

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

evening how well the lad plays Vinteuil's music; he overwhelms me; at his age, to have such an understanding while he is still such a boy, such a kid! Oh, this evening is only to be a little rehearsal. The big affair is to come off in two or three days. But it will be much more distinguished this evening. And so we are delighted that you have come," he went on, employing the plural pronoun doubtless because a King says: "It is our wish." "The programme is so magnificent that I have advised Mme. Verdurin to give two parties. One in a few days' time, at which she will have all her own friends, the other to-night at which the hostess is, to use a legal expression, 'disseized.' It is I who have issued the invitations, and I have collected a few people from another sphere, who may be useful to Charlie, and whom it will be nice for the Verdurins to meet. Don't you agree, it is all very well to have the finest music played by the greatest artists, the effect of the performance remains muffled in cotton-wool, if the audience is composed of the milliner from across the way and the grocer from round the corner. You know what I think of the intellectual level of people in society, still they can play certain quite important parts, among others that which in public events devolves upon the press, and which is that of being an organ of publicity. You know what I mean; I have for instance invited my sister-in-law Oriane; it is not certain that she will come, but it is on the other hand certain that, if she does come, she will understand absolutely nothing. But one does not ask her to understand, which is beyond her capacity, but to talk, a task which is admirably suited to her, and which she never fails to perform. What is the result? To-morrow as ever is, instead of the silence of

THE CAPTIVE

the milliner and the grocer, an animated conversation at the Mortemarts' with Oriane telling everyone that she has heard the most marvellous music, that a certain Morel, and so forth; unspeakable rage of the people not invited, who will say: 'Palamède thought, no doubt, that we were unworthy; anyhow, who are these people who were giving the party?' a counterblast quite as useful as Oriane's praises, because Morel's name keeps cropping up all the time and is finally engraved in the memory like a lesson that one has read over a dozen times. All this forms a chain of circumstances which may be of value to the artist, to the hostess, may serve as a sort of megaphone for a performance which will thus be made audible to a remote public. Really, it is worth the trouble; you shall see what progress Charlie has made. And what is more, we have discovered a new talent in him, my dear fellow, he writes like an angel. Like an angel, I tell you." M. de Charlus omitted to say that for some time past he had been employing Morel, like those great noblemen of the seventeenth century who scorned to sign and even to write their own slanderous attacks, to compose certain vilely calumnious little paragraphs at the expense of Comtesse Molé. Their insolence apparent even to those who merely glanced at them, how much more cruel were they to the young woman herself, who found in them, so skilfully introduced that nobody but herself saw the point, certain passages from her own correspondence, textually quoted, but interpreted in a sense which made them as deadly as the cruellest revenge. They killed the lady. But there is edited every day in Paris, Balzac would tell us, a sort of spoken newspaper, more terrible than its printed rivals. We shall see later

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

on that this verbal press reduced to nothing the power of a Charlus who had fallen out of fashion, and exalted far above him a Morel who was not worth the millionth part of his former patron. Is this intellectual fashion really so simple, and does it sincerely believe in the nullity of a Charlus of genius, in the incontestable authority of a crass Morel? The Baron was not so innocent in his implacable vengeance. Whence, no doubt, that bitter venom on his tongue, the spreading of which seemed to dye his cheeks with jaundice when he was in a rage. "You who knew Bergotte," M. de Charlus went on, "I thought at one time that you might, perhaps, by refreshing his memory with regard to the youngster's writings, collaborate in short with myself, help me to assist a two-fold talent, that of a musician and a writer, which may one day acquire the prestige of that of Berlioz. As you know, the Illustrious have often other things to think about, they are smothered in flattery, they take little interest except in themselves. But Bergotte, who was genuinely unpretentious and obliging, promised me that he would get into the *Gaulois*, or some such paper, those little articles, a blend of the humourist and the musician, which he really does quite charmingly now, and I am really very glad that Charlie should combine with his violin this little stroke of Ingres's pen. I know that I am prone to exaggeration, when he is concerned, like all the old fairy godmothers of the Conservatoire. What, my dear fellow, didn't you know that? You have never observed my little weakness. I pace up and down for hours on end outside the examination hall. I'm as happy as a queen. As for Charlie's prose, Bergotte assured me that it was really very good indeed."

THE CAPTIVE

M. de Charlus, who had long been acquainted with Bergotte through Swann, had indeed gone to see him a few days before his death, to ask him to find an opening for Morel in some newspaper for a sort of commentary, half humorous, upon the music of the day. In doing so, M. de Charlus had felt some remorse, for, himself a great admirer of Bergotte, he was conscious that he never went to see him for his own sake, but in order, thanks to the respect, partly intellectual, partly social, that Bergotte felt for him, to be able to do a great service to Morel, or to some other of his friends. That he no longer made use of people in society for any other purpose did not shock M. de Charlus, but to treat Bergotte thus had appeared to him more offensive, for he felt that Bergotte had not the calculating nature of people in society, and deserved better treatment. Only, his was a busy life, and he could never find time for anything except when he was greatly interested in something, when, for instance, it affected Morel. What was more, as he was himself extremely intelligent, the conversation of an intelligent man left him comparatively cold, especially that of Bergotte who was too much the man of letters for his liking and belonged to another clan, did not share his point of view. As for Bergotte, he had observed the calculated motive of M. de Charlus's visits, but had felt no resentment, for he had been incapable, throughout his life, of any consecutive generosity, but anxious to give pleasure, broadminded, insensitive to the pleasure of administering a rebuke. As for M. de Charlus's vice, he had never partaken of it to the smallest extent, but had found in it rather an element of colour in the person affected, *fas et nefas*, for an artist, consisting not in moral examples

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

but in memories of Plato or of Sodom. "But you, fair youth, we never see you at Quai Conti. You don't abuse their hospitality!" I explained that I went out as a rule with my cousin. "Do you hear that! He goes out with his cousin! What a most particularly pure young man!" said M. de Charlus to Brichot. Then, turning again to myself: "But we are not asking you to give an account of your life, my boy. You are free to do anything that amuses you. We merely regret that we have no share in it. Besides, you shew very good taste, your cousin is charming, ask Brichot, she quite turned his head at Douville. We shall regret her absence this evening. But you did just as well, perhaps, not to bring her with you. Vinteuil's music is delightful. But I have heard that we are to meet the composer's daughter and her friend, who have a terrible reputation. That sort of thing is always awkward for a girl. They are sure to be there, unless the ladies have been detained in the country, for they were to have been present without fail all afternoon at a rehearsal which Mme. Verdurin was giving to-day, to which she had invited only the bores, her family, the people whom she could not very well have this evening. But a moment ago, before dinner, Charlie told us that the sisters Vinteuil, as we call them, for whom they were all waiting, never came." Notwithstanding the intense pain that I had felt at the sudden association with its effect, of which alone I had been aware, of the cause, at length discovered, of Albertine's anxiety to be there that afternoon, the presence publicly announced (but of which I had been ignorant) of Mlle. Vinteuil and her friend, my mind was still sufficiently detached to remark that M. de Charlus, who had told us, a few minutes earlier, that he had not

THE CAPTIVE

seen Charlie since the morning, was now brazenly admitting that he had seen him before dinner. My pain became visible. "Why, what is the matter with you?" said the Baron, "You are quite green; come, let us go in, you will catch cold, you don't look at all well." It was not any doubt as to Albertine's virtue that M. de Charlus's words had awakened in me. Many other doubts had penetrated my mind already; at each fresh doubt we feel that the measure is heaped full, that we cannot cope with it, then we manage to find room for it all the same, and once it is introduced into our vital essence it enters into competition there with so many longings to believe, so many reasons to forget, that we speedily become accustomed to it, and end by ceasing to pay it any attention. There remains only, like a partly healed pain, the menace of possible suffering, which, the counterpart of desire, a feeling of the same order, and like it become the centre of our thoughts, radiates through them to an infinite circumference a wistful melancholy, as desire radiates pleasures whose origin we fail to perceive, wherever anything may suggest the idea of the person with whom we are in love. But pain revives as soon as a fresh doubt enters our mind complete; even if we assure ourselves almost immediately: "I shall deal with this, there must be some method by which I need not suffer, it cannot be true," nevertheless there has been a first moment in which we suffered as though we believed it. If we had merely members, such as legs and arms, life would be endurable; unfortunately we carry inside us that little organ which we call the heart, which is subject to certain maladies in the course of which it is infinitely impressionable by everything that concerns the life of a certain

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

person, so that a lie—that most harmless of things, in the midst of which we live so unconcernedly, if the lie be told by ourself or by strangers—coming from that person, causes the little heart, which surgeons ought really to be able to excise from us, intolerable anguish. Let us not speak of the brain, for our mind may go on reasoning interminably in the course of this anguish, it does no more to mitigate it than by taking thought can we soothe an aching tooth. It is true that this person is to blame for having lied to us, for she had sworn to us that she would always tell us the truth. But we know from our own shortcomings, towards other people, how little an oath is worth. And we have deliberately believed them when they came from her, the very person to whose interest it has always been to lie to us, and whom, moreover, we did not select for her virtues. It is true that, later on, she would almost cease to have any need to lie to us—at the moment when our heart will have grown indifferent to her falsehood—because then we shall not feel any interest in her life. We know this, and, notwithstanding, we deliberately sacrifice our own life, either by killing ourself for her sake, or by letting ourself be sentenced to death for having murdered her, or simply by spending, in the course of a few evenings, our whole fortune upon her, which will oblige us presently to commit suicide because we have not a penny in the world. Besides, however calm we may imagine ourself when we are in love, we always have love in our heart in a state of unstable equilibrium. A trifle is sufficient to exalt it to the position of happiness, we radiate happiness, we smother in our affection not her whom we love, but those who have given us merit in her eyes, who have protected

THE CAPTIVE

her from every evil temptation; we think that our mind is at ease, and a word is sufficient: "Gilberte is not coming," "Mademoiselle Vinteuil is expected," to make all the pre-conceived happiness towards which we were rising collapse, to make the sun hide his face, to open the bag of the winds and let loose the internal tempest which one day we shall be incapable of resisting. That day, the day upon which the heart has become so frail, our friends who respect us are pained that such trifles, that certain persons, can so affect us, can bring us to death's door. But what are they to do? If a poet is dying of septic pneumonia, can one imagine his friends explaining to the pneumococcus that the poet is a man of talent and that it ought to let him recover? My doubt, in so far as it referred to Mlle. Vinteuil, was not entirely novel. But to a certain extent, my jealousy of the afternoon, inspired by Léa and her friends, had abolished it. Once that peril of the Trocadéro was removed, I had felt that I had recaptured for all time complete peace of mind. But what was entirely novel to me was a certain excursion as to which Andrée had told me: "We went to this place and that, we didn't meet anyone," and during which, on the contrary, Mlle. Vinteuil had evidently arranged to meet Albertine at Mme. Verdurin's. At this moment I would gladly have allowed Albertine to go out by herself, to go wherever she might choose, provided that I might lock up Mlle. Vinteuil and her friend somewhere and be certain that Albertine would not meet them. The fact is that jealousy is, as a rule, partial, of intermittent application, whether because it is the painful extension of an anxiety which is provoked now by one person, now by another with whom our mistress may be in love, or because of the exiguity of our thought which is

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

able to realise only what it can represent to itself and leaves everything else in an obscurity which can cause us only a proportionately modified anguish.

Just as we were about to ring the bell we were overtaken by Saniette who informed us that Princess Sherbatoff had died at six o'clock, and added that he had not at first recognised us. "I envisaged you, however, for some time," he told us in a breathless voice. "Is it aught but curious that I should have hesitated?" To say "Is it not curious" would have seemed to him wrong, and he had acquired a familiarity with obsolete forms of speech that was becoming exasperating. "Not but what you are people whom one may acknowledge as friends." His grey complexion seemed to be illuminated by the livid glow of a storm. His breathlessness, which had been noticeable, as recently as last summer, only when M. Verdurin "jumped down his throat," was now continuous. "I understand that an unknown work of Vinteuil is to be performed by excellent artists, and singularly by Morel." "Why singularly?" inquired the Baron who detected a criticism in the adverb. "Our friend Saniette," Brichot made haste to exclaim, acting as interpreter, "is prone to speak, like the excellent scholar that he is, the language of an age in which 'singularly' was equivalent to our 'especially.'"

As we entered the Verdurins' hall, M. de Charlus asked me whether I was engaged upon any work and as I told him that I was not, but that I was greatly interested at the moment in old dinner-services of plate and porcelain, he assured me that I could not see any finer than those that the Verdurins had; that moreover I might have seen them at la Raspelière, since, on the pretext that one's pos-

THE CAPTIVE

sessions are also one's friends, they were so silly as to cart everything down there with them; it would be less convenient to bring everything out for my benefit on the evening of a party; still, he would tell them to shew me anything that I wished to see. I begged him not to do anything of the sort. M. de Charlus unbuttoned his greatcoat, took off his hat, and I saw that the top of his head had now turned silver in patches. But like a precious shrub which is not only coloured with autumn tints but certain leaves of which are protected by bandages of wadding or incrustations of plaster, M. de Charlus received from these few white hairs at his crest only a further variegation added to those of his face. And yet, even beneath the layers of different expressions, paint and hypocrisy which formed such a bad "make-up," his face continued to hide from almost everyone the secret that it seemed to me to be crying aloud. I was almost put to shame by his eyes in which I was afraid of his surprising me in the act of reading it, as from an open book, by his voice which seemed to me to be repeating it in every tone, with an untiring indecency. But secrets are well kept by such people, for everyone who comes in contact with them is deaf and blind. The people who learned the truth from some one else, from the Verdurins for instance, believed it, but only for so long as they had not met M. de Charlus. His face, so far from spreading, dissipated every scandalous rumour. For we form so extravagant an idea of certain characters that we would be incapable of identifying one of them with the familiar features of a person of our acquaintance. And we find it difficult to believe in such a person's vices, just as we

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

can never believe in the genius of a person with whom we went to the Opera last night.

M. de Charlus was engaged in handing over his great-coat with the instructions of a familiar guest. But the footman to whom he was handing it was a newcomer, and quite young. Now M. de Charlus had by this time begun, as people say, to "lose his bearings" and did not always remember what might and what might not be done. The praiseworthy desire that he had felt at Balbec to shew that certain topics did not alarm him, that he was not afraid to declare with regard to some one or other: "He is a nice-looking boy," to utter, in short, the same words as might have been uttered by somebody who was not like himself, this desire he had now begun to express by saying on the contrary things which nobody could ever have said who was not like him, things upon which his mind was so constantly fixed that he forgot that they do not form part of the habitual preoccupation of people in general. And so, as he gazed at the new footman, he raised his forefinger in the air in a menacing fashion and, thinking that he was making an excellent joke: "You are not to make eyes at me like that, do you hear?" said the Baron, and, turning to Brichot: "He has a quaint little face, that boy, his nose is rather fun," and, completing his joke, or yielding to a desire, he lowered his forefinger horizontally, hesitated for an instant, then, unable to control himself any longer, thrust it irresistibly forwards at the footman and touched the tip of his nose, saying "Pif!" "That's a rum card," the footman said to himself, and inquired of his companions whether it was a joke or what it was. "It is just a way he has," said the butler (who regarded the Baron as slightly

THE CAPTIVE

"touched," "a bit balmy"), "but he is one of Madame's friends for whom I have always had the greatest respect, he has a good heart."

"Are you coming back this year to Incarville?" Brichot asked me. "I believe that our hostess has taken la Raspelière again, for all that she has had a crow to pick with her landlords. But that is nothing, it is a cloud that passes," he added in the optimistic tone of the newspapers that say: "Mistakes have been made, it is true, but who does not make mistakes at times?" But I remembered the state of anguish in which I had left Balbec, and felt no desire to return there. I kept putting off to the morrow my plans for Albertine. "Why, of course he is coming back, we need him, he is indispensable to us," declared M. de Charlus with the authoritative and uncomprehending egoism of friendliness.

At this moment M. Verdurin appeared to welcome us. When we expressed our sympathy over Princess Sherbatoff, he said: "Yes, I believe she is rather ill." "No, no, she died at six o'clock," exclaimed Saniette. "Oh, you exaggerate everything," was M. Verdurin's brutal retort, for, since he had not cancelled his party, he preferred the hypothesis of illness, imitating unconsciously the Duc de Guermantes. Saniette, not without fear of catching cold, for the outer door was continually being opened, stood waiting resignedly for some one to take his hat and coat. "What are you hanging about there for, like a whipped dog?" M. Verdurin asked him. "I am waiting until one of the persons who are charged with the cloakroom can take my coat and give me a number." "What is that you say?" demanded M. Verdurin with a stern expression. "'Charged with the cloakroom?'

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Are you going off your head? 'In charge of the cloak-room,' is what we say, if we've got to teach you to speak your own language, like a man who has had a stroke." "Charged with a thing is the correct form," murmured Saniette in a stifled tone; "the abbé Le Batteux. . . ." "You make me tired, you do," cried M. Verdurin in a voice of thunder. "How you do wheeze! Have you been running upstairs to an attic?" The effect of M. Verdurin's rudeness was that the servants in the cloakroom allowed other guests to take precedence of Saniette and, when he tried to hand over his things, replied: "Wait for your turn, Sir, don't be in such a hurry." "There's system for you, competent fellows, that's right, my lads," said M. Verdurin with an approving smile, in order to encourage them in their tendency to keep Saniette waiting till the end. "Come along," he said to us, "the creature wants us all to catch our death hanging about in his beloved draught. Come and get warm in the drawing-room. 'Charged with the cloakroom,' indeed, what an idiot!" "He is inclined to be a little precious, but he's not a bad fellow," said Brichot. "I never said that he was a bad fellow, I said that he was an idiot," was M. Verdurin's harsh retort.

Meanwhile Mme. Verdurin was busily engaged with Cottard and Ski. Morel had just declined (because M. de Charlus could not be present) an invitation from some friends of hers to whom she had promised the services of the violinist. The reason for Morel's refusal to perform at the party which the Verdurins' friends were giving, a reason which we shall presently see reinforced by others of a far more serious kind, might have found its justification in a habit common to the leisured classes in

THE CAPTIVE

general but specially distinctive of the little nucleus. To be sure, if Mme. Verdurin intercepted between a newcomer and one of the faithful a whispered speech which might let it be supposed that they were already acquainted, or wished to become more intimate ("On Friday, then, at So-and-so's," or "Come to the studio any day you like; I am always there until five o'clock, I shall look forward to seeing you"), agitated, supposing the newcomer to occupy a "position" which would make him a brilliant recruit to the little clan, the Mistress, while pretending not to have heard anything, and preserving in her fine eyes, shadowed by the habit of listening to Debussy more than they would have been by that of sniffing cocaine, the extenuated expression that they derived from musical intoxication alone, revolved nevertheless behind her splendid brow, inflated by all those quartets and the headaches that were their consequence, thoughts which were not exclusively polyphonic, and unable to contain herself any longer, unable to postpone the injection for another instant, flung herself upon the speakers, drew them apart, and said to the newcomer, pointing to the "faithful" one: "You wouldn't care to come and dine to meet *him*, next Saturday, shall we say, or any day you like, with some really nice people! Don't speak too loud, as I don't want to invite all this mob" (a word used to denote for five minutes the little nucleus, disdained for the moment in favour of the newcomer in whom so many hopes were placed).

But this infatuated impulse, this need to make friendly overtures, had its counterpart. Assiduous attendance at their Wednesdays aroused in the Verdurins an opposite tendency. This was the desire to quarrel, to hold aloof.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

It had been strengthened, had almost been wrought to a frenzy during the months spent at la Raspelière, where they were all together morning, noon and night. M. Verdurin went out of his way to prove one of his guests in the wrong, to spin webs in which he might hand over to his comrade spider some innocent fly. Failing a grievance, he would invent some absurdity. As soon as one of the faithful had been out of the house for half an hour, they would make fun of him in front of the others, would feign surprise that their guests had not noticed how his teeth were never clean, or how on the contrary he had a mania for brushing them twenty times a day. If any one took the liberty of opening a window, this want of breeding would cause a glance of disgust to pass between host and hostess. A moment later Mme. Verdurin would ask for a shawl, which gave M. Verdurin an excuse for saying in a tone of fury: "No, I shall close the window, I wonder who had the impertinence to open it," in the hearing of the guilty wretch who blushed to the roots of his hair. You were rebuked indirectly for the quantity of wine that you had drunk. "It won't do you any harm. Navvies thrive on it!" If two of the faithful went out together without first obtaining permission from the Mistress, their excursions led to endless comments, however innocent they might be. Those of M. de Charlus with Morel were not innocent. It was only the fact that M. de Charlus was not staying at la Raspelière (because Morel was obliged to live near his barracks) that retarded the hour of satiety, disgust, retching. That hour was, however, about to strike.

Mme. Verdurin was furious and determined to "enlighten" Morel as to the ridiculous and detestable part

THE CAPTIVE

that M. de Charlus was making him play. "I must add," she went on (Mme. Verdurin, when she felt that she owed anyone a debt of gratitude which would be a burden to him, and was unable to rid herself of it by killing him, would discover a serious defect in him which would honourably dispense her from shewing her gratitude), "I must add that he gives himself airs in my house which I do not at all like." The truth was that Mme. Verdurin had another more serious reason than Morel's refusal to play at her friends' party for picking a quarrel with M. de Charlus. The latter, overcome by the honour he was doing the Mistress in bringing to Quai Conti people who after all would never have come there for her sake, had, on hearing the first names that Mme. Verdurin had suggested as those of people who ought to be invited, pronounced the most categorical ban upon them in a peremptory tone which blended the rancorous pride of a crotchety nobleman with the dogmatism of the expert artist in questions of entertainment who would cancel his programme and withhold his collaboration sooner than agree to concessions which, in his opinion, would endanger the success of the whole. M. de Charlus had given his approval, hedging it round with reservations, to Saintine alone, with whom, in order not to be bothered with his wife, Mme. de Guermantes had passed, from a daily intimacy, to a complete severance of relations, but whom M. de Charlus, finding him intelligent, continued to see. True, it was among a middle-class set, with a cross-breeding of the minor nobility, where people are merely very rich and connected with an aristocracy whom the true aristocracy does not know, that Saintine, at one time the flower of the Guermantes set, had gone to seek

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

his fortune and, he imagined, a social foothold. But Mme. Verdurin, knowing the blue-blooded pretensions of the wife's circle, and failing to take into account the husband's position (for it is what is immediately over our head that gives us the impression of altitude and not what is almost invisible to us, so far is it lost in the clouds), felt that she ought to justify an invitation of Saintine by pointing out that he knew a great many people, "having married Mlle. —." The ignorance which this assertion, the direct opposite of the truth, revealed in Mme. Verdurin caused the Baron's painted lips to part in a smile of indulgent scorn and wide comprehension. He disdained a direct answer, but as he was always ready to express in social examples theories which shewed the fertility of his mind and the arrogance of his pride, with the inherited frivolity of his occupations: "Saintine ought to have come to me before marrying," he said, "there is such a thing as social as well as physiological eugenics, and I am perhaps the only specialist in existence. Saintine's case aroused no discussion, it was clear that, in making the marriage that he made, he was tying a stone to his neck, and hiding his light under a bushel. His social career was at an end. I should have explained this to him, and he would have understood me, for he is quite intelligent. On the other hand, there was a person who had everything that he required to make his position exalted, predominant, world-wide, only a terrible cable bound him to the earth. I helped him, partly by pressure, partly by force, to break his bonds and now he has won, with a triumphant joy, the freedom, the omnipotence that he owes to me; it required, perhaps, a little determination on his part, but what a reward!

THE CAPTIVE

Thus a man can himself, when he has the sense to listen to me, become the midwife of his destiny." It was only too clear that M. de Charlus had not been able to influence his own; action is a different thing from speech, even eloquent speech, and from thought, even the thoughts of genius. "But, so far as I am concerned, I live the life of a philosopher who looks on with interest at the social reactions which I have foretold, but who does not assist them. And so I have continued to visit Saintine, who has always received me with the whole-hearted deference which is my due. I have even dined with him in his new abode, where one is as heavily bored, in the midst of the most sumptuous splendour, as one used to be amused in the old days when, living from hand to mouth, he used to assemble the best society in a wretched attic. Him, then, you may invite, I give you leave, but I rule out with my veto all the other names that you have mentioned. And you will thank me for it, for, if I am an expert in arranging marriages, I am no less an expert in arranging parties. I know the rising people who give tone to a gathering, make it go; and I know also the names that will bring it down to the ground, make it fall flat." These exclusions were not always founded upon the Baron's personal resentments nor upon his artistic refinements, but upon his skill as an actor. When he had perfected, at the expense of somebody or something, an entirely successful epigram, he was anxious to let it be heard by the largest possible audience, but took care not to admit to the second performance the audience of the first who could have borne witness that the novelty was not novel. He would then rearrange his drawing-room, simply because he did not alter his programme, and, when he had scored a suc-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

cess in conversation, would, if need be, have organised a tour, and given exhibitions in the provinces. Whatever may have been the various motives for these exclusions, they did not merely annoy Mme. Verdurin, who felt her authority as a hostess impaired, they also did her great damage socially, and for two reasons. The first was that M. de Charlus, even more susceptible than Jupien, used to quarrel, without anyone's ever knowing why, with the people who were most suited to be his friends. Naturally, one of the first punishments that he could inflict upon them was that of not allowing 'them to be invited to a party which he was giving at the Verdurins'. Now these pariahs were often people who are in the habit of ruling the roast, as the saying is, but who in M. de Charlus's eyes had ceased to rule it from the day on which he had quarrelled with them. For his imagination, in addition to finding people in the wrong in order to quarrel with them, was no less ingenious in stripping them of all importance as soon as they ceased to be his friends. If, for instance, the guilty person came of an extremely old family, whose dukedom, however, dates only from the nineteenth century, such a family as the Montesquiou, from that moment all that counted for M. de Charlus was the precedence of the dukedom, the family becoming nothing. "They are not even Dukes," he would exclaim. "It is the title of the abbé de Montesquiou which passed most irregularly to a collateral, less than eighty years ago. The present Duke, if Duke he can be called, is the third. You may talk to me if you like of people like the Uzès, the la Trémouille, the Luynes, who are tenth or fourteenth Dukes, or my brother who is twelfth Duc de Guermantes and seventeenth Prince of Cordova. The

THE CAPTIVE

Montesquiou are descended from an old family, what would that prove, supposing that it were proved? They have descended so far that they have reached the fourteenth storey below stairs." Had he on the contrary quarrelled with a gentleman who possessed an ancient dukedom, who boasted the most magnificent connexions, was related to ruling princes, but to whose line this distinction had come quite suddenly without any length of pedigree, a Luynes for instance, the case was altered, pedigree alone counted. "I ask you;—M. Alberti, who does not emerge from the mire until Louis XIII. What can it matter to us that favouritism at court allowed them to pick up dukedoms to which they have no right?" What was more, with M. de Charlus, the fall came immediately after the exaltation because of that tendency peculiar to the Guermantes to expect from conversation, from friendship, something that these are incapable of giving, as well as the symptomatic fear of becoming the objects of slander. And the fall was all the greater, the higher the exaltation had been. Now nobody had ever found such favour with the Baron as he had markedly shewn for Comtesse Molé. By what sign of indifference did she reveal, one fine day, that she had been unworthy of it? The Comtesse always maintained that she had never been able to solve the problem. The fact remains that the mere sound of her name aroused in the Baron the most violent rage, provoked the most eloquent but the most terrible philippics. Mme. Verdurin, to whom Mme. Molé had been very kind, and who was founding, as we shall see, great hopes upon her and had rejoiced in anticipation at the thought that the Comtesse would meet in her house all the noblest names, as the Mistress said, "of France

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

and Navarre," at once proposed to invite "Madame de Molé." "Oh, my God! Everyone has his own taste," M. de Charlus had replied, "and if you, Madame, feel a desire to converse with Mme. Pipelet, Mme. Gibout and Mme. Joseph Prudhomme, I ask nothing better, but let it be on an evening when I am not present. I could see as soon as you opened your mouth that we do not speak the same language, since I was mentioning the names of the nobility, and you retort with the most obscure names of professional and tradespeople, dirty scandalmongering little bounders, little women who imagine themselves patronesses of the arts because they repeat, an octave lower, the manners of my Guermantes sister-in-law, like a jay that thinks it is imitating a peacock. I must add that it would be positively indecent to admit to a party which I am pleased to give at Mme. Verdurin's a person whom I have with good reason excluded from my society, a sheep devoid of birth, loyalty, intelligence, who is so idiotic as to suppose that she is capable of playing the Duchesse de Guermantes and the Princesse de Guermantes, a combination which is in itself idiotic, since the Duchesse de Guermantes and the Princesse de Guermantes are poles apart. It is as though a person should pretend to be at once Reichenberg and Sarah Bernhardt. In any case, even if it were not impossible, it would be extremely ridiculous. Even though I may, myself, smile at times at the exaggeration of one and regret the limitations of the other, that is my right. But that upstart little frog trying to blow herself out to the magnitude of two great ladies who, at all events, always reveal the incomparable distinction of blood, it is enough, as the saying is, to make a cat laugh. The Molé! That is a

THE CAPTIVE

name which must not be uttered in my hearing, or else I must simply withdraw," he concluded with a smile, in the tone of a doctor, who, thinking of his patient's interests in spite of that same patient's opposition, lets it be understood that he will not tolerate the collaboration of a homoeopath. On the other hand, certain persons whom M. de Charlus regarded as negligible might indeed be so for him but not for Mme. Verdurin. M. de Charlus, with his exalted birth, could afford to dispense with people in the height of fashion, the assemblage of whom would have made Mme. Verdurin's drawing-room one of the first in Paris. She, at the same time, was beginning to feel that she had already on more than one occasion missed the coach, not to mention the enormous retardation that the social error of the Dreyfus case had inflicted upon her, not without doing her a service all the same. I forget whether I have mentioned the disapproval with which the Duchesse de Guermantes had observed certain persons of her world who, subordinating everything else to the Case, excluded fashionable women from their drawing-rooms and admitted others who were not fashionable, because they were for or against the fresh trial, and had then been criticised in her turn by those same ladies, as lukewarm, unsound in her views, and guilty of placing social distinctions above the national interests; may I appeal to the reader, as to a friend with regard to whom one completely forgets, at the end of a conversation, whether one has remembered, or had an opportunity to tell him something important? Whether I have done so or not, the attitude of the Duchesse de Guermantes can easily be imagined, and indeed if we look at it in the light of subsequent history may appear, from the social point

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

of view, perfectly correct. M. de Cambremer regarded the Dreyfus case as a foreign machination intended to destroy the Intelligence Service, to undermine discipline, to weaken the army, to divide the French people, to pave the way for invasion. Literature being, apart from a few of La Fontaine's fables, a sealed book to the Marquis, he left it to his wife to prove that the cruelly introspective writers of the day had, by creating a spirit of irreverence, arrived by a parallel course at a similar result. "M. Reinach and M. Hervieu are in the plot," she would say. Nobody will accuse the Dreyfus case of having premeditated such dark designs upon society. But there it certainly has broken down the hedges. The social leaders who refuse to allow politics into society are as foreseeing as the soldiers who refuse to allow politics to permeate the army. Society is like the sexual appetite; one does not know at what forms of perversion it may not arrive, once we have allowed our choice to be dictated by aesthetic considerations. The reason that they were Nationalists gave the Faubourg Saint-Germain the habit of entertaining ladies from another class of society; the reason vanished with Nationalism, the habit remained. Mme. Verdurin, by the bond of Dreyfusism, had attracted to her house certain writers of distinction who for the moment were of no advantage to her socially, because they were Dreyfusards. But political passions are like all the rest, they do not last. Fresh generations arise which are incapable of understanding them. Even the generation that felt them changes, feels political passions which, not being modelled exactly upon their predecessors, make it rehabilitate some of the excluded, the reason for exclusion having altered. Monarchists no longer cared, at the

THE CAPTIVE

time of the Dreyfus case, whether a man had been a Republican, that is to say a Radical, that is to say Anticlerical, provided that he was an Antisemite and a Nationalist. Should a war ever come, patriotism would assume another form and if a writer was chauvinistic nobody would stop to think whether he had or had not been a Dreyfusard. It was thus that, at each political crisis, at each artistic revival, Mme. Verdurin had collected one by one, like a bird building its nest, the several items, useless for the moment, of what would one day be her Salon. The Dreyfus case had passed, Anatole France remained. Mme. Verdurin's strength lay in her genuine love of art, the trouble that she used to take for her faithful, the marvellous dinners that she gave for them alone, without inviting anyone from the world of fashion. Each of the faithful was treated at her table as Bergotte had been treated at Mme. Swann's. When a boon companion of this sort had turned into an illustrious man whom everybody was longing to meet, his presence at Mme. Verdurin's had none of the artificial, composite effect of a dish at an official or farewell banquet, cooked by Potel or Chabot, but was merely a delicious "ordinary" which you would have found there in the same perfection on a day when there was no party at all. At Mme. Verdurin's the cast was trained to perfection, the repertory most select, all that was lacking was an audience. And now that the public taste had begun to turn from the rational and French art of a Bergotte, and to go in, above all things, for exotic forms of music, Mme. Verdurin, a sort of official representative in Paris of all foreign artists, was not long in making her appearance, by the side of the exquisite Princess Yourbelietef, an aged

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Fairy Godmother, grim but all-powerful, to the Russian dancers. This charming invasion, against whose seductions only the stupidest of critics protested, infected Paris, as we know, with a fever of curiosity less burning, more purely aesthetic, but quite as intense perhaps as that aroused by the Dreyfus case. There again Mme. Verdurin, but with a very different result socially, was to take her place in the front row. Just as she had been seen by the side of Mme. Zola, immediately under the bench, during the trial in the Assize Court, so when the new generation of humanity, in their enthusiasm for the Russian ballet, thronged to the Opéra, crowned with the latest novelty in aigrettes, they invariably saw in a stage box Mme. Verdurin by the side of Princess Yourbeletief. And just as, after the emotions of the law courts, people used to go in the evening to Mme. Verdurin's, to meet Picquart or Labori in the flesh and what was more to hear the latest news of the Case, to learn what hopes might be placed in Zurlinden, Loubet, Colonel Jouaust, the Regulations, so now, little inclined for sleep after the enthusiasm aroused by *Sheherazade* or *Prince Igor*, they repaired to Mme. Verdurin's, where under the auspices of Princess Yourbeletief and their hostess an exquisite supper brought together every night the dancers themselves, who had abstained from dinner so as to be more resilient, their director, their designers, the great composers Igor Stravinski and Richard Strauss, a permanent little nucleus, around which, as round the supper-table of M. and Mme. Helvétius, the greatest ladies in Paris and foreign Royalties were not too proud to gather. Even those people in society who professed to be endowed with taste and drew unnecessary distinctions between the various Rus-

THE CAPTIVE

sian ballets, regarding the setting of the *Sylphides* as somehow "purer" than that of *Sheherazade*, which they were almost prepared to attribute to negro inspiration, were enchanted to meet face to face the great revivers of theatrical taste, who in an art that is perhaps a little more artificial than that of the easel had created a revolution as profound as Impressionism itself.

To revert to M. de Charlus, Mme. Verdurin would not have minded so much if he had placed on his Index only Comtesse Molé and Mme. Bontemps, whom she had picked out at Odette's on the strength of her love of the fine arts, and who during the Dreyfus case had come to dinner occasionally bringing her husband, whom Mme. Verdurin called "lukewarm," because he was not making any move for a fresh trial, but who, being extremely intelligent, and glad to form relations in every camp, was delighted to shew his independence by dining at the same table as Labori, to whom he listened without uttering a word that might compromise himself, but managed to slip in at the right moment a tribute to the loyalty, recognised by all parties, of Jaurès. But the Baron had similarly proscribed several ladies of the aristocracy whose acquaintance Mme. Verdurin, on the occasion of some musical festivity or a collection for charity, had recently formed and who, whatever M. de Charlus might think of them, would have been, far more than himself, essential to the formation of a fresh nucleus at Mme. Verdurin's, this time aristocratic. Mme. Verdurin had indeed been reckoning upon this party, to which M. de Charlus would be bringing her women of the same set, to mix her new friends with them, and had been relishing in anticipation the surprise that the latter would feel

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

upon meeting at Quai Conti their own friends or relatives invited there by the Baron. She was disappointed and furious at his veto. It remained to be seen whether the evening, in these conditions, would result in profit or loss to herself. The loss would not be too serious if only M. de Charlus's guests came with so friendly a feeling for Mme. Verdurin that they would become her friends in the future. In this case the mischief would be only half done, these two sections of the fashionable world, which the Baron had insisted upon keeping apart, would be united later on, he himself being excluded, of course, when the time came. And so Mme. Verdurin was awaiting the Baron's guests with a certain emotion. She would not be slow in discovering the state of mind in which they came, and the degree of intimacy to which she might hope to attain. While she waited, Mme. Verdurin took counsel with the faithful, but, upon seeing M. de Charlus enter the room with Brichot and myself, stopped short. Greatly to our astonishment, when Brichot told her how sorry he was to learn that her dear friend was so seriously ill, Mme. Verdurin replied: "Listen, I am obliged to confess that I am not at all sorry. It is useless to pretend to feel what one does not feel." No doubt she spoke thus from want of energy, because she shrank from the idea of wearing a long face throughout her party, from pride, in order not to appear to be seeking excuses for not having cancelled her invitations, from self-respect also and social aptitude, because the absence of grief which she displayed was more honourable if it could be attributed to a peculiar antipathy, suddenly revealed, to the Princess, rather than to a universal insensibility, and because her hearers could not fail to be disarmed by a

THE CAPTIVE

sincerity as to which there could be no doubt. If Mme. Verdurin had not been genuinely unaffected by the death of the Princess, would she have gone on to excuse herself for giving the party, by accusing herself of a far more serious fault? Besides, one was apt to forget that Mme. Verdurin would thus have admitted, while confessing her grief, that she had not had the strength of mind to forego a pleasure; whereas the indifference of the friend was something more shocking, more immoral, but less humiliating, and consequently easier to confess than the frivolity of the hostess. In matters of crime, where the culprit is in danger, it is his material interest that prompts the confession. Where the fault incurs no penalty, it is self-esteem. Whether it was that, doubtless feeling the pretext to be too hackneyed of the people who, so as not to allow a bereavement to interrupt their life of pleasure, go about saying that it seems to them useless to display the outward signs of a grief which they feel in their hearts, Mme. Verdurin preferred to imitate those intelligent culprits who are revolted by the commonplaces of innocence and whose defence—a partial admission, though they do not know it—consists in saying that they would see no harm in doing what they are accused of doing, although, as it happens, they have had no occasion to do it; or that, having adopted, to explain her conduct, the theory of indifference, she found, once she had started upon the downward slope of her unnatural feeling, that it was distinctly original to have felt it, that she displayed a rare perspicacity in having managed to diagnose her own symptoms, and a certain “nerve” in proclaiming them; anyhow, Mme. Verdurin kept dwelling upon her want of grief, not without a certain proud satisfaction, as

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

of a paradoxical psychologist and daring dramatist. "Yes, it is very funny," she said, "I hardly felt it. Of course, I don't mean to say that I wouldn't rather she were still alive, she was not a bad person." "Yes, she was," put in M. Verdurin. "Ah! He doesn't approve of her because he thought that I was doing myself harm by having her here, but he is quite pig-headed about that." "Do me the justice to admit," said M. Verdurin, "that I never approved of your having her. I always told you that she had a bad reputation." "But I have never heard a thing against her," protested Saniette. "What!" exclaimed Mme. Verdurin, "everybody knew; bad isn't the word, it was scandalous, appalling. No, it has nothing to do with that. I couldn't explain, myself, what I felt; I didn't dislike her, but I took so little interest in her that, when we heard that she was seriously ill, my husband himself was quite surprised, and said: 'Anyone would think that you didn't mind.' Why, this evening, he offered to put off the party, and I insisted upon having it, because I should have thought it a farce to shew a grief which I do not feel." She said this because she felt that it had a curious smack of the "independent theatre," and was at the same time singularly convenient; for an admitted insensibility or immorality simplifies life as much as does easy virtue; it converts reproachable actions, for which one no longer need seek any excuse, into a duty imposed by sincerity. And the faithful listened to Mme. Verdurin's speech with the blend of admiration and misgiving which certain cruelly realistic plays, that shewed a profound observation, used at one time to cause, and, while they marvelled to see their beloved Mistress display a novel aspect of her rectitude

THE CAPTIVE

and independence, more than one of them, albeit he assured himself that after all it would not be the same thing, thought of his own death, and asked himself whether, on the day when death came to him, they would draw the blinds or give a party at Quai Conti. "I am very glad that the party has not been put off, for my guests' sake," said M. de Charlus, not realising that in expressing himself thus he was offending Mme. Verdurin. Meanwhile I was struck, as was everybody who approached Mme. Verdurin that evening, by a far from pleasant odour of rhino-gomenol. The reason was as follows. We know that Mme. Verdurin never expressed her artistic feelings in a moral, but always in a physical fashion, so that they might appear more inevitable and more profound. So, if one spoke to her of Vinteuil's music, her favourite, she remained unmoved, as though she expected to derive no emotion from it. But after a few minutes of a fixed, almost abstracted gaze, in a sharp, matter of fact, scarcely civil tone (as though she had said to you: "I don't in the least mind your smoking, it's because of the carpet; it's a very fine one (not that that matters either), but it's highly inflammable, I'm dreadfully afraid of fire, and I shouldn't like to see you all roasted because some one had carelessly dropped a cigarette end on it"), she replied: "I have no fault to find with Vinteuil; to my mind, he is the greatest composer of the age, only I can never listen to that sort of stuff without weeping all the time" (she did not apply any pathos to the word "weeping," she would have used precisely the same tone for "sleeping"; certain slander-mongers used indeed to insist that the latter verb would have been more applicable, though no one could ever be

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

certain, for she listened to the music with her face buried in her hands, and certain snoring sounds might after all have been sobs). "I don't mind weeping, not in the least; only I get the most appalling colds afterwards. It stuffs up my mucous membrane, and the day after I look like nothing on earth. I have to inhale for days on end before I can utter. However, one of Cottard's pupils, a charming person, has been treating me for it. He goes by quite an original rule: 'Prevention is better than cure.' And he greases my nose before the music begins. It is radical. I can weep like all the mothers who ever lost a child, not a trace of a cold. Sometimes a little conjunctivitis, that's all. It is absolutely efficacious. Otherwise I could never have gone on listening to Vinteuil. I was just going from one bronchitis to another." I could not refrain from alluding to Mlle. Vinteuil. "Isn't the composer's daughter to be here," I asked Mme. Verdurin, "with one of her friends?" "No, I have just had a telegram," Mme. Verdurin said evasively, "they have been obliged to remain in the country." I felt a momentary hope that there might never have been any question of their leaving it and that Mme. Verdurin had announced the presence of these representatives of the composer only in order to make a favourable impression upon the performers and their audience. "What, didn't they come, then, to the rehearsal this afternoon?" came with a feigned curiosity from the Baron who was anxious to let it appear that he had not seen Charlie. The latter came up to greet me. I whispered a question in his ear about Mlle. Vinteuil; he seemed to me to know little or nothing about her. I signalled to him not to let himself be heard and told him that we should discuss the question

THE CAPTIVE

later on. He bowed, and assured me that he would be delighted to place himself entirely at my disposal. I observed that he was far more polite, more respectful, than he had been in the past. I spoke warmly of him—who might perhaps be able to help me to clear up my suspicions—to M. de Charlus who replied: “He only does what is natural, there would be no point in his living among respectable people if he didn’t learn good manners.” These, according to M. de Charlus, were the old manners of France, untainted by any British bluntness. Thus when Charlie, returning from a tour in the provinces or abroad, arrived in his travelling suit at the Baron’s, the latter, if there were not too many people present, would kiss him without ceremony upon both cheeks, perhaps a little in order to banish by so ostentatious a display of his affection any idea of its being criminal, perhaps because he could not deny himself a pleasure, but still more, doubtless, from a literary sense, as upholding and illustrating the traditional manners of France, and, just as he would have countered the Munich or modern style of furniture by keeping in his rooms old armchairs that had come to him from a great-grandmother, countering the British phlegm with the affection of a warm-hearted father of the eighteenth century, unable to conceal his joy at beholding his son once more. Was there indeed a trace of incest in this paternal affection? It is more probable that the way in which M. de Charlus habitually appeased his vicious cravings, as to which we shall learn something in due course, was not sufficient for the need of affection, which had remained unsatisfied since the death of his wife; the fact remains that after having thought more than once of a second marriage, he was now

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

devoured by a maniacal desire to adopt an heir. People said that he was going to adopt Morel, and there was nothing extraordinary in that. The invert who has been unable to feed his passion save on a literature written for women-loving men, who used to think of men when he read Musset's *Nuits*, feels the need to partake, nevertheless, in all the social activities of the man who is not an invert, to keep a lover, as the old frequenter of the Opera keeps ballet-girls, to settle down, to marry or form a permanent tie, to become a father.

M. de Charlus took Morel aside on the pretext of making him tell him what was going to be played, but above all finding a great consolation, while Charlie shewed him his music, in displaying thus publicly their secret intimacy. In the mean time I myself felt a certain charm. For albeit the little clan included few girls, on the other hand girls were abundantly invited on the big evenings. There were a number present, and very pretty girls too, whom I knew. They wafted smiles of greeting to me across the room. The air was thus decorated at every moment with the charming smile of some girl. That is the manifold, occasional ornament of evening parties, as it is of days. We remember an atmosphere because girls were smiling in it.

Many people might have been greatly surprised had they overheard the furtive remarks which M. de Charlus exchanged with a number of important gentlemen at this party. These were two Dukes, a distinguished General, a great writer, a great physician, a great barrister. And the remarks in question were: "By the way, did you notice the footman, I mean the little fellow they take on the carriage? At our cousin Guermantes', you don't know of anyone?" "At the moment, no." "I say,

THE CAPTIVE

though, outside the door, where the carriages stop, there used to be a fair little person, in breeches, who seemed to me most attractive. She called my carriage most charmingly, I would gladly have prolonged the conversation." "Yes, but I believe she's altogether against it, besides, she puts on airs, you like to get to business at once, you would loathe her. Anyhow, I know there's nothing doing, a friend of mine tried." "That is a pity, I thought the profile very fine, and the hair superb." "Really, as much as that? I think, if you had seen a little more of her, you would have been disillusioned. No, in the supper-room, only two months ago you would have seen a real marvel, a great fellow six foot six, a perfect skin, and loves it, too. But he's gone off to Poland." "Ah, that is rather a long way." "You never know, he may come back, perhaps. One always meets again somewhere." There is no great social function that does not, if, in taking a section of it, we contrive to cut sufficiently deep, resemble those parties to which doctors invite their patients, who utter the most intelligent remarks, have perfect manners, and would never shew that they were mad did they not whisper in our ear, pointing to some old gentleman who goes past: "That's Joan of Arc."

"I feel that it is our duty to enlighten him," Mme. Verdurin said to Brichot. "Not that I have anything against Charlus, far from it. He is a pleasant fellow and as for his reputation, I don't mind saying that it is not of a sort that can do me any harm! As far as I'm concerned, in our little clan, in our table-talk, as I detest flirts, the men who talk nonsense to a woman in a corner instead of discussing interesting topics, I've never had any fear with Charlus of what happened to me with

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Swann, and Elstir, and lots of them. With him I was quite safe, he would come to my dinners, all the women in the world might be there, you could be certain that the general conversation would not be disturbed by flirtations and whisperings. Charlus is in a class of his own, one doesn't worry, he might be a priest. Only, he must not be allowed to take it upon himself to order about the young men who come to the house and make a nuisance of himself in our little nucleus, or he'll be worse than a man who runs after women." And Mme. Verdurin was sincere in thus proclaiming her indulgence towards Charism. Like every ecclesiastical power she regarded human frailties as less dangerous than anything that might undermine the principle of authority, impair the orthodoxy, modify the ancient creed of her little Church. "If he does, then I shall bare my teeth. What do you say to a gentleman who tried to prevent Charlie from coming to a rehearsal because he himself was not invited? So he's going to be taught a lesson, I hope he'll profit by it, otherwise he can simply take his hat and go. He keeps the boy under lock and key, upon my word he does." And, using exactly the same expressions that almost anyone else might have used, for there are certain not in common currency which some particular subject, some given circumstance recalls almost inevitably to the mind of the speaker, who imagines that he is giving free expression to his thought when he is merely repeating mechanically the universal lesson, she went on: "It's impossible to see Morel nowadays without that great lout hanging round him, like an armed escort." M. Verdurin offered to take Charlie out of the room for a minute to explain things to him, on the pretext of asking him a

THE CAPTIVE

question. Mme. Verdurin was afraid that this might upset him, and that he would play badly in consequence. It would be better to postpone this performance until after the other. Perhaps even until a later occasion. For however Mme. Verdurin might look forward to the delicious emotion that she would feel when she knew that her husband was engaged in enlightening Charlie in the next room, she was afraid, if the shot missed fire, that he would lose his temper and would fail to reappear on the sixteenth.

What ruined M. de Charlus that evening was the ill-breeding—so common in their class—of the people whom he had invited and who were now beginning to arrive. Having come there partly out of friendship for M. de Charlus and also out of curiosity to explore these novel surroundings, each Duchess made straight for the Baron as though it were he who was giving the party and said, within a yard of the Verdurins, who could hear every word: "Shew me which is mother Verdurin; do you think I really need speak to her? I do hope, at least, that she won't put my name in the paper to-morrow, nobody would ever speak to me again. What! That woman with the white hair, but she looks quite presentable." Hearing some mention of Mlle. Vinteuil, who, however, was not in the room, more than one of them said: "Ah! The sonata-man's daughter? Shew me her" and, each finding a number of her friends, they formed a group by themselves, watched, sparkling with ironical curiosity, the arrival of the faithful, able at the most to point a finger at the odd way in which a person had done her hair, who, a few years later, was to make this the fashion in the very best society, and, in short,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

regretted that they did not find this house as different from the houses that they knew, as they had hoped to find it, feeling the disappointment of people in society who, having gone to the Boîte à Bruant in the hope that the singer would make a butt of them, find themselves greeted on their arrival with a polite bow instead of the expected:

Ah! voyez c'te gueule, c'te binette.

Ah! voyez c'te gueule qu'elle a.

M. de Charlus had, at Balbec, given me a perspicacious criticism of Mme. de Vaugoubert who, notwithstanding her keen intellect, had brought about, after his unexpected prosperity, the irremediable disgrace of her husband. The rulers to whose Court M. de Vaugoubert was accredited, King Theodosius and Queen Eudoxia, having returned to Paris, but this time for a prolonged visit, daily festivities had been held in their honour, in the course of which the Queen, on the friendliest terms with Mme. de Vaugoubert, whom she had seen for the last ten years in her own capital, and knowing neither the wife of the President of the Republic nor those of his Ministers, had neglected these ladies and kept entirely aloof with the Ambassadors. This lady, believing her own position to be unassailable—M. de Vaugoubert having been responsible for the alliance between King Theodosius and France—had derived from the preference that the Queen shewed for her society a proud satisfaction but no anxiety at the peril that threatened her, which took shape a few months later in the fact, wrongly considered impossible by the too confident couple, of the brutal dismissal from the Service of M. de Vaugoubert. M. de Charlus, remarking in the “crawler” upon the downfall

THE CAPTIVE

of his lifelong friend, expressed his astonishment that an intelligent woman had not, in such circumstances, brought all her influence with the King and Queen to bear, so as to secure that she might not seem to possess any influence, and to make them transfer to the wives of the President and his Ministers a civility by which those ladies would have been all the more flattered, that is to say which would have made them more inclined, in their satisfaction, to be grateful to the Vaugouberts, inasmuch as they would have supposed that civility to be spontaneous, and not dictated by them. But the man who can see the mistakes of others need only be exhilarated by circumstances in order to succumb to them himself. And M. de Charlus, while his guests fought their way towards him, to come and congratulate him, thank him, as though he were the master of the house, never thought of asking them to say a few words to Mme. Verdurin. Only the Queen of Naples, in whom survived the same noble blood that had flowed in the veins of her sisters the Empress Elisabeth and the Duchesse d'Alençon, made a point of talking to Mme. Verdurin as though she had come for the pleasure of meeting her rather than for the music and for M. de Charlus, made endless pretty speeches to her hostess, could not cease from telling her for how long she had been wishing to make her acquaintance, expressed her admiration for the house and spoke to her of all manner of subjects as though she were paying a call. She would so much have liked to bring her niece Elisabeth, she said (the niece who shortly afterwards was to marry Prince Albert of Belgium), who would be so sorry. She stopped talking when she saw the musicians mount the platform, asking which of them was Morel. She can scarcely have

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

been under any illusion as to the motives that led M. de Charlus to desire that the young virtuoso should be surrounded with so much glory. But the venerable wisdom of a sovereign in whose veins flowed the blood of one of the noblest races in history, one of the richest in experience, scepticism and pride, made her merely regard the inevitable defects of the people whom she loved best, such as her cousin Charlus (whose mother had been, like herself, a "Duchess in Bavaria"), as misfortunes that rendered more precious to them the support that they might find in herself and consequently made it even more pleasant to her to provide that support. She knew that M. de Charlus would be doubly touched by her having taken the trouble to come, in the circumstances. Only, being as good as she had long ago shewn herself brave, this heroic woman who, a soldier-queen, had herself fired her musket from the ramparts of Gaeta, always ready to take her place chivalrously by the weaker side, seeing Mme. Verdurin alone and abandoned, and unaware (for that matter) that she ought not to leave the Queen, had sought to pretend that for her, the Queen of Naples, the centre of this party, the lodestone that had made her come was Mme. Verdurin. She expressed her regret that she would not be able to remain until the end, as she had, although she never went anywhere, to go on to another party, and begged that on no account, when she had to go, should any fuss be made for her, thus discharging Mme. Verdurin of the honours which the latter did not even know that she ought to render.

One must, however, do M. de Charlus the justice of saying that, if he entirely forgot Mme. Verdurin and allowed her to be ignored, to a scandalous extent, by the

THE CAPTIVE

people "of his own world" whom he had invited, he did, on the other hand, realise that he must not allow these people to display, during the "symphonic recital" itself, the bad manners which they were exhibiting towards the Mistress. Morel had already mounted the platform, the musicians were assembling, and one could still hear conversations, not to say laughter, speeches such as "it appears, one has to be initiated to understand it." Immediately M. de Charlus, drawing himself erect, as though he had entered a different body from that which I had seen, not an hour ago, crawling towards Mme. Verdurin's door, assumed a prophetic expression and regarded the assembly with an earnestness which indicated that this was not the moment for laughter, whereupon one saw a rapid blush tinge the cheeks of more than one lady thus publicly rebuked, like a schoolgirl scolded by her teacher in front of the whole class. To my mind, M. de Charlus's attitude, noble as it was, was somehow slightly comic; for at one moment he pulverised his guests with a flaming glare, at another, in order to indicate to them as with a *vade mecum* the religious silence that ought to be observed, the detachment from every worldly consideration, he furnished in himself, as he raised to his fine brow his white-gloved hands, a model (to which they must conform) of gravity, already almost of ecstasy, without acknowledging the greetings of late-comers so indelicate as not to understand that it was now the time for High Art. They were all hypnotised; no one dared utter a sound, move a chair; respect for music—by virtue of Palamède's prestige—had been instantaneously inculcated in a crowd as ill-bred as it was exclusive.

When I saw appear on the little platform, not only

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Morel and a pianist, but performers upon other instruments as well, I supposed that the programme was to begin with works of composers other than Vinteuil. For I imagined that the only work of his in existence was his sonata for piano and violin.

Mme. Verdurin sat in a place apart, the twin hemispheres of her pale, slightly roseate brow magnificently curved, her hair drawn back, partly in imitation of an eighteenth century portrait, partly from the desire for coolness of a fever-stricken patient whom modesty forbids to reveal her condition, aloof, a deity presiding over musical rites, patron saint of Wagnerism and sick-headaches, a sort of almost tragic Norn, evoked by the spell of genius in the midst of all these bores, in whose presence she would more than ordinarily scorn to express her feelings upon hearing a piece of music which she knew better than they. The concert began, I did not know what they were playing, I found myself in a strange land. Where was I to locate it? Into what composer's country had I come? I should have been glad to know, and, seeing nobody near me whom I might question, I should have liked to be a character in those *Arabian Nights* which I never tired of reading and in which, in moments of uncertainty, there arose a genie or a maiden of ravishing beauty, invisible to everyone else but not to the embarrassed hero to whom she reveals exactly what he wishes to learn. Well, at this very moment I was favoured with precisely such a magical apparition. As, in a stretch of country which we suppose to be strange to us and which as a matter of fact we have approached from a new angle, when after turning out of one road we find ourself emerging suddenly upon another every

THE CAPTIVE

inch of which is familiar only we have not been in the habit of entering it from that end, we say to ourself immediately: "Why, this is the lane that leads to the garden gate of my friends the X——; I shall be there in a minute," and there, indeed, is their daughter at the gate, come out to greet us as we pass; so, all of a sudden, I found myself, in the midst of this music that was novel to me, right in the heart of Vinteuil's sonata; and, more marvellous than any maiden, the little phrase, enveloped, harnessed in silver, glittering with brilliant effects of sound, as light and soft as silken scarves, came towards me, recognisable in this new guise. My joy at having found it again was enhanced by the accent, so friendly familiar, which it adopted in addressing me, so persuasive, so simple, albeit without dimming the shimmering beauty with which it was resplendent. Its intention, however, was, this time, merely to shew me the way, which was not the way of the sonata, for this was an unpublished work of Vinteuil in which he had merely amused himself, by an allusion which was explained at this point by a sentence in the programme which one ought to have been reading simultaneously, in making the little phrase reappear for a moment. No sooner was it thus recalled than it vanished, and I found myself once more in an unknown world, but I knew now, and everything that followed only confirmed my knowledge, that this world was one of those which I had never even been capable of imagining that Vinteuil could have created, for when, weary of the sonata which was to me a universe thoroughly explored, I tried to imagine others equally beautiful but different, I was merely doing what those poets do who fill their artificial paradise with meadows, flowers

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

and streams which duplicate those existing already upon Earth. What was now before me made me feel as keen a joy as the sonata would have given me if I had not already known it, and consequently, while no less beautiful, was different. Whereas the sonata opened upon a dawn of liliated meadows, parting its slender whiteness to suspend itself over the frail and yet consistent mingling of a rustic bower of honeysuckle with white geraniums, it was upon continuous, level surfaces like those of the sea that, in the midst of a stormy morning beneath an already lurid sky, there began, in an eery silence, in an infinite void, this new masterpiece, and it was into a roseate dawn that, in order to construct itself progressively before me, this unknown universe was drawn from silence and from night. This so novel redness, so absent from the tender, rustic, pale sonata, tinged all the sky, as dawn does, with a mysterious hope. And a song already thrilled the air, a song on seven notes, but the strangest, the most different from any that I had ever imagined, from any that I could ever have been able to imagine, at once ineffable and piercing, no longer the cooing of a dove as in the sonata, but rending the air, as vivid as the scarlet tinge in which the opening bars had been bathed, something like the mystical crow of a cock, an ineffable but over-shrill appeal of the eternal morning. The cold atmosphere, soaked in rain, electric—of a quality so different, feeling wholly other pressures, in a world so remote from that, virginal and endowed only with vegetable life, of the sonata—changed at every moment, obliterating the empurpled promise of the Dawn. At noon, however, beneath a scorching though transitory sun, it seemed to fulfil itself in a dull, almost rustic bliss in which the peal

THE CAPTIVE

of clanging, racing bells (like those which kindled the blaze of the square outside the church of Combray, which Vinteuil, who must often have heard them, had perhaps discovered at that moment in his memory like a colour which the painter's hand has conveyed to his palette) seemed to materialise the coarsest joy. To be honest, from the aesthetic point of view, this joyous motive did not appeal to me, I found it almost ugly, its rhythm dragged so laboriously along the ground that one might have succeeded in imitating almost everything that was essential to it by merely making a noise, sounds, by the tapping of drumsticks upon a table. It seemed to me that Vinteuil had been lacking, here, in inspiration, and consequently I was a little lacking also in the power of attention.

I looked at the Mistress, whose sullen immobility seemed to be protesting against the noddings—in time with the music—of the empty heads of the ladies of the Faubourg. She did not say: "You understand that I know something about this music, and more than a little! If I had to express all that I feel, you would never hear the end of it!" She did not say this. But her upright, motionless body, her expressionless eyes, her straying locks said it for her. They spoke also of her courage, said that the musicians might go on, need not spare her nerves, that she would not flinch at the andante, would not cry out at the allegro. I looked at the musicians. The violoncellist dominated the instrument which he clutched between his knees, bowing his head to which its coarse features gave, in moments of mannerism, an involuntary expression of disgust; he leaned over it, fingered it with the same domestic patience with which he might have

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

plucked a cabbage, while by his side the harpist (a mere girl) in a short skirt, bounded on either side by the lines of her golden quadrilateral like those which, in the magic chamber of a Sibyl, would arbitrarily denote the ether, according to the consecrated rules, seemed to be going in quest, here and there, at the point required, of an exquisite sound, just as though, a little allegorical deity, placed in front of the golden trellis of the heavenly vault, she were gathering, one by one, its stars. As for Morel, a lock, hitherto invisible and lost in the rest of his hair, had fallen loose and formed a curl upon his brow. I turned my head slightly towards the audience to discover what M. de Charlus might be feeling at the sight of this curl. But my eyes encountered only the face, or rather the hands of Mme. Verdurin, for the former was entirely buried in the latter.

But very soon, the triumphant motive of the bells having been banished, dispersed by others, I succumbed once again to the music; and I began to realise that if, in the body of this septet, different elements presented themselves in turn, to combine at the close, so also Vinteuil's sonata, and, as I was to find later on, his other works as well, had been no more than timid essays, exquisite but very slight, towards the triumphant and complete masterpiece which was revealed to me at this moment. And so too, I could not help recalling how I had thought of the other worlds which Vinteuil might have created as of so many universes as hermetically sealed as each of my own love-affairs, whereas in reality I was obliged to admit that in the volume of my latest love—that is to say, my love for Albertine—my first inklings of love for her (at Balbec at the very beginning, then after the game of

THE CAPTIVE

ferret, then on the night when she slept at the hotel, then in Paris on the foggy afternoon, then on the night of the Guermantes' party, then at Balbec again, and finally in Paris where my life was now closely linked to her own) had been nothing more than experiments; indeed, if I were to consider, not my love for Albertine, but my life as a whole, my earlier love-affairs had themselves been but slight and timid essays, experiments, which paved the way to this vaster love: my love for Albertine. And I ceased to follow the music, in order to ask myself once again whether Albertine had or had not seen Mlle. Vinteuil during the last few days, as we interrogate afresh an internal pain, from which we have been distracted for a moment. For it was in myself that Albertine's possible actions were performed. Of each of the people whom we know we possess a double, but it is generally situated on the horizon of our imagination, of our memory; it remains more or less external to ourself, and what it has done or may have done has no greater capacity to cause us pain than an object situated at a certain distance, which provides us with only the painless sensations of vision. The things that affect these people we perceive in a contemplative fashion, we are able to deplore them in appropriate language which gives other people a sense of our kindness of heart, we do not feel them; but since the wound inflicted on me at Balbec, it was in my heart, at a great depth, difficult to extract, that Albertine's double was lodged. What I saw of her hurt me, as a sick man would be hurt whose senses were so seriously deranged that the sight of a colour would be felt by him internally like a knife-thrust in his living flesh. It was fortunate that I had not already yielded to the temptation to break with

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Albertine; the boring thought that I should have to see her again presently, when I went home, was a trifling matter compared with the anxiety that I should have felt if the separation had been permanent at this moment when I felt a doubt about her before she had had time to become immaterial to me. At the moment when I pictured her thus to myself waiting for me at home, like a beloved wife who found the time of waiting long, and had perhaps fallen asleep for a moment in her room, I was caressed by the passage of a tender phrase, homely and domestic, of the septet. Perhaps—everything is so interwoven and superimposed in our inward life—it had been inspired in Vinteuil by his daughter's sleep—his daughter, the cause to-day of all my troubles—when it enveloped in its quiet, on peaceful evenings, the work of the composer, this phrase which calmed me so, by the same soft background of silence which pacifies certain of Schumann's reveries, during which, even when "the Poet is speaking," one can tell that "the child is asleep." Asleep, awake, I should find her again this evening, when I chose to return home, Albertine, my little child. And yet, I said to myself, something more mysterious than Albertine's love seemed to be promised at the outset of this work, in those first cries of dawn. I endeavoured to banish the thought of my mistress, so as to think only of the composer. Indeed, he seemed to be present. One would have said that, reincarnate, the composer lived for all time in his music; one could feel the joy with which he was choosing the colour of some sound, harmonising it with the rest. For with other and more profound gifts Vinteuil combined that which few composers, and indeed few painters have possessed, of using colours not

THE CAPTIVE

merely so lasting but so personal that, just as time has been powerless to fade them, so the disciples who imitate him who discovered them, and even the masters who surpass him do not pale their originality. The revolution that their apparition has effected does not live to see its results merge unacknowledged in the work of subsequent generations; it is liberated, it breaks out again, and alone, whenever the innovator's works are performed in all time to come. Each note underlined itself in a colour which all the rules in the world could not have taught the most learned composers to imitate, with the result that Vinteuil, albeit he had appeared at his hour and was fixed in his place in the evolution of music, would always leave that place to stand in the forefront, whenever any of his compositions was performed, which would owe its appearance of having blossomed after the works of other more recent composers to this quality, apparently paradoxical and actually deceiving, of permanent novelty. A page of symphonic music by Vinteuil, familiar already on the piano, when one heard it rendered by an orchestra, like a ray of summer sunlight which the prism of the window disintegrates before it enters a dark dining-room, revealed like an unsuspected, myriad-hued treasure all the jewels of the *Arabian Nights*. But how can one compare to that motionless brilliance of light what was life, perpetual and blissful motion? This Vinteuil, whom I had known so timid and sad, had been capable—when he had to select a tone, to blend another with it—of audacities, had enjoyed a good fortune, in the full sense of the word, as to which the hearing of any of his works left one in no doubt. The joy that such chords had aroused in him, the increase of strength that it had given him

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

wherewith to discover others led the listener on also from one discovery to another, or rather it was the composer himself who guided him, deriving from the colours that he had invented a wild joy which gave him the strength to discover, to fling himself upon the others which they seemed to evoke, enraptured, quivering, as though from the shock of an electric spark, when the sublime came spontaneously to life at the clang of the brass, panting, drunken, maddened, dizzy, while he painted his great musical fresco, like Michelangelo strapped to his scaffold and dashing, from his supine position, tumultuous brush-strokes upon the ceiling of the Sistine chapel. Vinteuil had been dead for many years; but in the sound of these instruments which he had animated, it had been given him to prolong, for an unlimited time, a part at least of his life. Of his life as a man merely? If art was indeed but a prolongation of life, was it worth while to sacrifice anything to it, was it not as unreal as life itself? If I was to listen properly to this septet, I could not pause to consider the question. No doubt the glowing septet differed singularly from the candid sonata; the timid question to which the little phrase replied, from the breathless supplication to find the fulfilment of the strange promise that had resounded, so harsh, so supernatural, so brief, setting athrob the still inert crimson of the morning sky, above the sea. And yet these so widely different phrases were composed of the same elements, for just as there was a certain universe, perceptible by us in those fragments scattered here and there, in private houses, in public galleries, which were Elstir's universe, the universe which he saw, in which he lived, so too the music of Vinteuil extended, note by

THE CAPTIVE

note, key by key, the unknown colourings of an inestimable, unsuspected universe, made fragmentary by the gaps that occurred between the different occasions of hearing his work performed; those two so dissimilar questions which commanded the so different movements of the sonata and the septet, the former breaking into short appeals a line continuous and pure, the latter welding together into an indivisible structure a medley of scattered fragments, were nevertheless, one so calm and timid, almost detached and as though philosophic, the other so anxious, pressing, imploring, were nevertheless the same prayer, poured forth before different risings of the inward sun and merely refracted through the different mediums of other thoughts, of artistic researches carried on through the years in which he had tried to create something new. A prayer, a hope which was at heart the same, distinguishable beneath these disguises in the various works of Vinteuil, and on the other hand not to be found elsewhere than in his works. For these phrases historians of music might indeed find affinities, a pedigree in the works of other great composers, but merely for subordinate reasons, from external resemblances, from analogies which were ingeniously discovered by reasoning rather than felt by a direct impression. The impression that these phrases of Vinteuil imparted was different from any other, as though, notwithstanding the conclusions to which science seems to point, the individual did really exist. And it was precisely when he was seeking vigorously to be something new that one recognised beneath the apparent differences the profound similarities; and the deliberate resemblances that existed in the body of a work, when Vinteuil repeated once and

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

again a single phrase, diversified it, amused himself by altering its rhythm, by making it reappear in its original form, these deliberate resemblances, the work of the intellect, inevitably superficial, never succeeded in being as striking as those resemblances, concealed, involuntary, which broke out in different colours, between the two separate masterpieces; for then Vinteuil, seeking to do something new, questioned himself, with all the force of his creative effort, reached his own essential nature at those depths, where, whatever be the question asked, it is in the same accent, that is to say its own, that it replies. Such an accent, the accent of Vinteuil, is separated from the accents of other composers by a difference far greater than that which we perceive between the voices of two people, even between the cries of two species of animal: by the difference that exists between the thoughts of those other composers and the eternal investigations of Vinteuil, the question that he put to himself in so many forms, his habitual speculation, but as free from analytical formulas of reasoning as if it were being carried out in the world of the angels, so that we can measure its depth, but without being any more able to translate it into human speech than are disincarnate spirits when, evoked by a medium, he questions them as to the mysteries of death. And even when I bore in mind the acquired originality which had struck me that afternoon, that kinship which musical critics might discover among them, it is indeed a unique accent to which rise, and return in spite of themselves those great singers that original composers are, which is a proof of the irreducibly individual existence of the soul. Though Vinteuil might try to make more solemn, more grand, or to make more sprightly and gay

THE CAPTIVE

what he saw reflected in the mind of his audience, yet, in spite of himself, he submerged it all beneath an under-current which makes his song eternal and at once recognisable. This song, different from those of other singers, similar to all his own, where had Vinteuil learned, where had he heard it? Each artist seems thus to be the native of an unknown country, which he himself has forgotten, different from that from which will emerge, making for the earth, another great artist. When all is said, Vinteuil, in his latest works, seemed to have drawn nearer to that unknown country. The atmosphere was no longer the same as in the sonata, the questioning phrases became more pressing, more uneasy, the answers more mysterious; the clean-washed air of morning and evening seemed to influence even the instruments. Morel might be playing marvellously, the sounds that came from his violin seemed to me singularly piercing, almost blatant. This harshness was pleasing, and, as in certain voices, one felt in it a sort of moral virtue and intellectual superiority. But this might give offence. When his vision of the universe is modified, purified, becomes more adapted to his memory of the country of his heart, it is only natural that this should be expressed by a general alteration of sounds in the musician, as of colours in the painter. Anyhow, the more intelligent section of the public is not misled, since people declared later on that Vinteuil's last compositions were the most profound. Now no programme, no subject supplied any intellectual basis for judgment. One guessed therefore that it was a question of transposition, an increasing profundity of sound.

This lost country composers do not actually remember,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

but each of them remains all his life somehow attuned to it; he is wild with joy when he is singing the airs of his native land, betrays it at times in his thirst for fame, but then, in seeking fame, turns his back upon it, and it is only when he despises it that he finds it when he utters, whatever the subject with which he is dealing, that peculiar strain the monotony of which—for whatever its subject it remains identical in itself—proves the permanence of the elements that compose his soul. But is it not the fact then that from those elements, all the real residuum which we are obliged to keep to ourself, which cannot be transmitted in talk, even by friend to friend, by master to disciple, by lover to mistress, that ineffable something which makes a difference in quality between what each of us has felt and what he is obliged to leave behind at the threshold of the phrases in which he can communicate with his fellows only by limiting himself to external points common to us all and of no interest, art, the art of a Vinteuil like that of an Elstir, makes the man himself apparent, rendering externally visible in the colours of the spectrum the intimate composition of those worlds which we call individual persons and which, without the aid of art, we should never know? A pair of wings, a different mode of breathing, which would enable us to traverse infinite space, would in no way help us, for, if we visited Mars or Venus keeping the same senses, they would clothe in the same aspect as the things of the earth everything that we should be capable of seeing. The only true voyage of discovery, the only fountain of Eternal Youth, would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to behold the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to

THE CAPTIVE

behold the hundred universes that each of them beholds, that each of them is; and this we can contrive with an Elstir, with a Vinteuil; with men like these we do really fly from star to star. The andante had just ended upon a phrase filled with a tenderness to which I had entirely abandoned myself; there followed, before the next movement, a short interval during which the performers laid down their instruments and the audience exchanged impressions. A Duke, in order to shew that he knew what he was talking about, declared: "It is a difficult thing to play well." Other more entertaining people conversed for a moment with myself. But what were their words, which like every human and external word, left me so indifferent, compared with the heavenly phrase of music with which I had just been engaged? I was indeed like an angel who, fallen from the inebriating bliss of paradise, subsides into the most humdrum reality. And, just as certain creatures are the last surviving testimony to a form of life which nature has discarded, I asked myself if music were not the unique example of what might have been—if there had not come the invention of language, the formation of words, the analysis of ideas—the means of communication between one spirit and another. It is like a possibility which has ended in nothing; humanity has developed along other lines, those of spoken and written language. But this return to the unanalysed was so inebriating, that on emerging from that paradise, contact with people who were more or less intelligent seemed to me of an extraordinary insignificance. People—I had been able during the music to remember them, to blend them with it; or rather I had blended with the music little more than the memory of one person only, which was

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Albertine. And the phrase that ended the andante seemed to me so sublime that I said to myself that it was a pity that Albertine did not know it, and, had she known it, would not have understood what an honour it was to be blended with anything so great as this phrase which brought us together, and the pathetic voice of which she seemed to have borrowed. But, once the music was interrupted, the people who were present seemed utterly lifeless. Refreshments were handed round. M. de Charlus accosted a footman now and then with: "How are you? Did you get my note? Can you come?" No doubt there was in these remarks the freedom of the great nobleman who thinks he is flattering his hearer and is himself more one of the people than a man of the middle classes; there was also the cunning of the criminal who imagines that anything which he volunteers is on that account regarded as innocent. And he added, in the Guermantes tone of Mme. de Villeparisis: "He's a good young fellow, such a good sort, I often employ him at home." But his adroitness turned against the Baron, for people thought his intimate conversation and correspondence with footmen extraordinary. The footmen themselves were not so much flattered as embarrassed, in the presence of their comrades. Meanwhile the septet had begun again and was moving towards its close; again and again one phrase or another from the sonata recurred, but always changed, its rhythm and harmony different, the same and yet something else, as things recur in life; and they were phrases of the sort which, without our being able to understand what affinity assigns to them as their sole and necessary home the past life of a certain composer, are to be found only in his work, and appear

THE CAPTIVE

constantly in it, where they are the fairies, the dryads, the household gods; I had at the start distinguished in the septet two or three which reminded me of the sonata. Presently—bathed in the violet mist which rose particularly in Vinteuil's later work, so much so that, even when he introduced a dance measure, it remained captive in the heart of an opal—I caught the sound of another phrase from the sonata, still hovering so remote that I barely recognised it; hesitating, it approached, vanished as though in alarm, then returned, joined hands with others, come, as I learned later on, from other works, summoned yet others which became in their turn attractive and persuasive, as soon as they were tamed, and took their places in the ring, a ring divine but permanently invisible to the bulk of the audience, who, having before their eyes only a thick veil through which they saw nothing, punctuated arbitrarily with admiring exclamations a continuous boredom which was becoming deadly. Then they withdrew, save one which I saw reappear five times or six, without being able to distinguish its features, but so caressing, so different—as was no doubt the little phrase in Swann's sonata—from anything that any woman had ever made me desire, that this phrase which offered me in so sweet a voice a happiness which would really have been worth the struggle to obtain it, is perhaps—this invisible creature whose language I did not know and whom I understood so well—the only Stranger that it has ever been my good fortune to meet. Then this phrase broke up, was transformed, like the little phrase in the sonata, and became the mysterious appeal of the start. A phrase of a plaintive kind rose in opposition to it, but so profound, so vague, so internal, almost

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

so organic and visceral that one could not tell at each of its repetitions whether they were those of a theme or of an attack of neuralgia. Presently these two motives were wrestling together in a close fight in which now one disappeared entirely, and now the listener could catch only a fragment of the other. A wrestling match of energies only, to tell the truth; for if these creatures attacked one another, it was rid of their physical bodies, of their appearance, of their names, and finding in me an inward spectator, himself indifferent also to their names and to all details, interested only in their immaterial and dynamic combat and following with passion its sonorous changes. In the end the joyous motive was left triumphant; it was no longer an almost anxious appeal addressed to an empty sky, it was an ineffable joy which seemed to come from Paradise, a joy as different from that of the sonata as from a grave and gentle angel by Bellini, playing the theorbo, would be some archangel by Mantegna sounding a trump. I might be sure that this new tone of joy, this appeal to a super-terrestrial joy, was a thing that I would never forget. But should I be able, ever, to realise it? This question seemed to me all the more important, inasmuch as this phrase was what might have seemed most definitely to characterise—from its sharp contrast with all the rest of my life, with the visible world—those impressions which at remote intervals I recaptured in my life as starting-points, foundation-stones for the construction of a true life: the impression that I had felt at the sight of the steeples of Martinville, or of a line of trees near Balbec. In any case, to return to the particular accent of this phrase, how strange it was that the presentiment most different from

THE CAPTIVE

what life assigns to us on earth, the boldest approximation to the bliss of the world beyond should have been materialised precisely in the melancholy, respectable little old man whom we used to meet in the Month of Mary at Combray; but, stranger still, how did it come about that this revelation, the strangest that I had yet received, of an unknown type of joy, should have come to me from him, since, it was understood, when he died he left nothing behind him but his sonata, all the rest being non-existent in indecipherable scribblings. Indecipherable they may have been, but they had nevertheless been in the end deciphered, by dint of patience, intelligence and respect, by the only person who had lived sufficiently in Vinteuil's company to understand his method of working, to interpret his orchestral indications: Mlle. Vinteuil's friend. Even in the lifetime of the great composer, she had acquired from his daughter the reverence that the latter felt for her father. It was because of this reverence that, in those moments in which people run counter to their natural inclinations, the two girls had been able to find an insane pleasure in the profanations which have already been narrated. (Her adoration of her father was the primary condition of his daughter's sacrilege. And no doubt they ought to have foregone the delight of that sacrilege, but it did not express the whole of their natures.) And, what is more, the profanations had become rarefied until they disappeared altogether, in proportion as their morbid carnal relations, that troubled, smouldering fire, had given place to the flame of a pure and lofty friendship. Mlle. Vinteuil's friend was sometimes worried by the importunate thought that she had perhaps hastened the death of Vinteuil. At any rate, by spending

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

years in poring over the cryptic scroll left by him, in establishing the correct reading of those illegible hieroglyphs, Mlle. Vinteuil's friend had the consolation of assuring the composer whose grey hairs she had sent in sorrow to the grave an immortal and compensating glory. Relations which are not consecrated by the laws establish bonds of kinship as manifold, as complex, even more solid than those which spring from marriage. Indeed, without pausing to consider relations of so special a nature, do we not find every day that adultery, when it is based upon genuine love, does not upset the family sentiment, the duties of kinship, but rather revivifies them. Adultery brings the spirit into what marriage would often have left a dead letter. A good-natured girl who merely from convention will wear mourning for her mother's second husband has not tears enough to shed for the man whom her mother has chosen out of all the world as her lover. Anyhow, Mlle. Vinteuil had acted only in a spirit of Sadism, which did not excuse her, but it gave me a certain consolation to think so later on. She must indeed have realised, I told myself, at the moment when she and her friend profaned her father's photograph, that what they were doing was merely morbidity, silliness, and not the true and joyous wickedness which she would have liked to feel. This idea that it was merely a pretence of wickedness spoiled her pleasure. But if this idea recurred to her mind later on, as it had spoiled her pleasure, so it must then have diminished her grief. "It was not I," she must have told herself, "I was out of my mind. I myself mean still to pray for my father's soul, not to despair of his forgiveness." Only it is possible that this idea, which had certainly presented itself

THE CAPTIVE

to her in her pleasure, may not have presented itself in her grief. I would have liked to be able to put it into her mind. I am sure that I should have done her good and that I should have been able to reestablish between her and the memory of her father a pleasant channel of communication.

As in the illegible note-books in which a chemist of genius, who does not know that death is at hand, jots down discoveries which will perhaps remain forever unknown, Mlle. Vinteuil's friend had disentangled, from papers more illegible than strips of papyrus, dotted with a cuneiform script, the formula eternally true, forever fertile, of this unknown joy, the mystic hope of the crimson Angel of the dawn. And I to whom, albeit not so much perhaps as to Vinteuil, she had been also, she had been once more this very evening, by reviving afresh my jealousy of Albertine, she was above all in the future to be the cause of so many sufferings, it was thanks to her, in compensation, that there had been able to come to my ears the strange appeal which I should never for a moment cease to hear, as the promise and proof that there existed something other, realisable no doubt by art, than the nullity that I had found in all my pleasures and in love itself, and that if my life seemed to me so empty, at least there were still regions unexplored.

What she had enabled us, thanks to her labour, to know of Vinteuil was, to tell the truth, the whole of Vinteuil's work. Compared with this septet, certain phrases from the sonata which alone the public knew appeared so commonplace that one failed to understand how they could have aroused so much admiration. Similarly we are surprised that, for years past, pieces as triv-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

ial as the *Evening Star* or *Elisabeth's Prayer* can have aroused in the concert-hall fanatical worshippers who wore themselves out in applause and in crying *encore* at the end of what after all is poor and trite to us who know *Tristan*, the *Rheingold* and the *Meistersinger*. We are left to suppose that those featureless melodies contained already nevertheless in infinitesimal, and for that reason, perhaps, more easily assimilable quantities, something of the originality of the masterpieces which, in retrospect, are alone of importance to us, but which their very perfection may perhaps have prevented from being understood; they have been able to prepare the way for them in our hearts. Anyhow it is true that, if they gave a confused presentiment of the beauties to come, they left these in a state of complete obscurity. It was the same with Vinteuil; if at his death he had left behind him—excepting certain parts of the sonata—only what he had been able to complete, what we should have known of him would have been, in relation to his true greatness, as little as, in the case of, say, Victor Hugo, if he had died after the *Pas d'Armes du Roi Jean*, the *Fiancée du Timbalier* and *Sarah la Baigneuse*, without having written a line of the *Légende des Siècles* or the *Contemplations*: what is to us his real work would have remained purely potential, as unknown as those universes to which our perception does not attain, of which we shall never form any idea.

Anyhow, the apparent contrast, that profound union between genius (talent too and even virtue) and the sheath of vices in which, as had happened in the case of Vinteuil, it is so frequently contained, preserved, was legible, as in a popular allegory, in the mere assembly of

THE CAPTIVE

the guests among whom I found myself once again when the music had come to an end. This assembly, albeit limited this time to Mme. Verdurin's drawing-room, resembled many others, the ingredients of which are unknown to the general public, and which philosophical journalists, if they are at all well-informed, call Parisian, or Panamist, or Dreyfusard, never suspecting that they may equally well be found in Petersburg, Berlin, Madrid, and at every epoch; if as a matter of fact the Under Secretary of State for Fine Arts, an artist to his fingertips, well-bred and smart, several Duchesses and three Ambassadors with their wives were present this evening at Mme. Verdurin's, the proximate, immediate cause of their presence lay in the relations that existed between M. de Charlus and Morel, relations which made the Baron anxious to give as wide a celebrity as possible to the artistic triumphs of his young idol, and to obtain for him the cross of the Legion of Honour; the remoter cause which had made this assembly possible was that a girl living with Mlle. Vinteuil in the same way as the Baron was living with Charlie had brought to light a whole series of works of genius which had been such a revelation that before long a subscription was to be opened under the patronage of the Minister of Education, with the object of erecting a statue of Vinteuil. Moreover, these works had been assisted, no less than by Mlle. Vinteuil's relations with her friend, by the Baron's relations with Charlie, a sort of cross-road, a short cut, thanks to which the world was enabled to overtake these works without the preliminary circuit, if not of a want of comprehension which would long persist, at least of a complete ignorance which might have lasted for years. Whenever an event

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

occurs which is within the range of the vulgar mind of the moralising journalist, a political event as a rule, the moralising journalists are convinced that there has been some great change in France, that we shall never see such evenings again, that no one will ever again admire Ibsen, Renan, Dostoievski, D'Annunzio, Tolstoi, Wagner, Strauss. For moralising journalists take their text from the equivocal undercurrents of these official manifestations, in order to find something decadent in the art which is there celebrated and which as often as not is more austere than any other.' But there is no name among those most revered by these moralising journalists which has not quite naturally given rise to some such strange gathering, although its strangeness may have been less flagrant and better concealed. In the case of this gathering, the impure elements that associated themselves with it struck me from another aspect; to be sure, I was as well able as anyone to dissociate them, having learned to know them separately, but anyhow it came to pass that some of them, those which concerned Mlle. Vinteuil and her friend, speaking to me of Combray, spoke to me also of Albertine, that is to say of Balbec, since it was because I had long ago seen Mlle. Vinteuil at Montjouvain and had learned of her friend's intimacy with Albertine, that I was presently, when I returned home, to find, instead of solitude, Albertine awaiting me, and that the others, those which concerned Morel and M. de Charlus, speaking to me of Balbec, where I had seen, on the platform at Doncières, their intimacy begin, spoke to me of Combray and of its two "ways," for M. de Charlus was one of those Guermantes, Counts of Combray, inhabiting Combray without having any dwell-

THE CAPTIVE

ing there, between earth and heaven, like Gilbert the Bad in his window: while, after all, Morel was the son of that old valet who had enabled me to know the lady in pink, and had permitted me, years after, to identify her with Mme. Swann.

M. de Charlus repeated, when, the music at an end, his guests came to say good-bye to him, the same error that he had made when they arrived. He did not ask them to shake hands with their hostess, to include her and her husband in the gratitude that was being showered on himself. There was a long queue waiting, but a queue that led to the Baron alone, a fact of which he must have been conscious, for as he said to me a little later: "The form of the artistic celebration ended in a 'few-words-in-the-vestry' touch that was quite amusing." The guests even prolonged their expressions of gratitude with indiscriminate remarks which enabled them to remain for a moment longer in the Baron's presence, while those who had not yet congratulated him on the success of his party hung wearily in the rear. A stray husband or two may have announced his intention of going; but his wife, a snob as well as a Duchess, protested: "No, no, even if we are kept waiting an hour, we cannot go away without thanking Palamède, who has taken so much trouble. There is nobody else left now who can give entertainments like this." Nobody would have thought of asking to be introduced to Mme. Verdurin any more than to the attendant in a theatre to which some great lady has for one evening brought the whole aristocracy. "Were you at Eliane de Montmorency's yesterday, cousin?" asked Mme. de Mortemart, seeking an excuse to prolong their conversation. "Good gracious, no; I like Eliane, but I

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

never can understand her invitations. I must be very stupid, I'm afraid," he went on, parting his lips in a broad smile, while Mme. de Mortemart realised that she was to be made the first recipient of "one of Palamède's" as she had often been of "one of Oriane's." "I did indeed receive a card a fortnight ago from the charming Eliane. Above the questionably authentic name of 'Montmorency' was the following kind invitation: 'My dear cousin, will you please remember me next Friday at half-past nine.' Beneath were written two less gratifying words: 'Czech Quartet.' These seemed to me incomprehensible, and in any case to have no more connexion with the sentence above than the words 'My dear ——,' which you find on the back of a letter, with nothing else after them, when the writer has already begun again on the other side, and has not taken a fresh sheet, either from carelessness or in order to save paper. I am fond of Eliane: and so I felt no annoyance, I merely ignored the strange and inappropriate allusion to a Czech Quartet, and, as I am a methodical man, I placed on my chimneypiece the invitation to remember Madame de Montmorency on Friday at half-past nine. Although renowned for my obedient, punctual and meek nature, as Buffon says of the camel"—at this, laughter seemed to radiate from M. de Charlus who knew that on the contrary he was regarded as the most impossible person to live with—"I was a few minutes late (it took me a few minutes to change my clothes), and without any undue remorse, thinking that half-past nine meant ten, at the stroke of ten in a comfortable dressing-gown, with warm slippers on my feet, I sat down in my chimney corner to remember Eliane as she had asked me and with a concentration which began

THE CAPTIVE

to relax only at half-past ten. Tell her please that I complied strictly with her audacious request. I am sure she will be gratified." Mme. de Mortemart was helpless with laughter, in which M. de Charlus joined. "And tomorrow," she went on, forgetting that she had already long exceeded the time that might be allotted to her, "are you going to our La Rochefoucauld cousins?" "Oh, that, now, is quite impossible, they have invited me, and you too, I see, to a thing it is utterly impossible to imagine, which is called, if I am to believe their card of invitation, a 'dancing tea.' I used to be considered pretty nimble when I was young, but I doubt whether I could ever decently have drunk a cup of tea while I was dancing. No, I have never cared for eating or drinking in unnatural positions. You will remind me that my dancing days are done. But even sitting down comfortably to drink my tea—of the quality of which I am suspicious since it is called 'dancing'—I should be afraid lest other guests younger than myself, and less nimble possibly than I was at their age, might spill their cups over my clothes which would interfere with my pleasure in draining my own." Nor indeed was M. de Charlus content with leaving Mme. Verdurin out of the conversation while he spoke of all manner of subjects which he seemed to be taking pleasure in developing and varying, that cruel pleasure which he had always enjoyed of keeping indefinitely on their feet the friends who were waiting with an excruciating patience for their turn to come; he even criticised all that part of the entertainment for which Mme. Verdurin was responsible. "But, talking about cups, what in the world are those strange little bowls which remind me of the vessels in which, when I was a

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

young man, people used to get sorbets from Poiré Blanche. Somebody said to me just now that they were for 'iced coffee.' But if it comes to that, I have seen neither coffee nor ice. What curious little objects—so very ambiguous." In saying this M. de Charlus had placed his white-gloved hands vertically over his lips and had modestly circumscribed his indicative stare as though he were afraid of being heard, or even seen by his host and hostess. But this was a mere feint, for in a few minutes he would be offering the same criticisms to the Mistress herself, and a little later would be insolently enjoining: "No more iced-coffee cups, remember! Give them to one of your friends whose house you wish to disfigure. But warn her not to have them in the drawing-room, or people might think that they had come into the wrong room, the things are so exactly like chamberpots." "But, cousin," said the guest, lowering her own voice also, and casting a questioning glance at M. de Charlus, for she was afraid of offending not Mme. Verdurin but him, "perhaps she doesn't quite know yet. . . ." "She shall be taught." "Oh!" laughed the guest, "she couldn't have a better teacher! She *is* lucky! If you are in charge, one can be sure there won't be a false note." "There wasn't one, if it comes to that, in the music." "Oh! It was sublime. One of those pleasures which can never be forgotten. Talking of that marvellous violinist," she went on, imagining in her innocence that M. de Charlus was interested in the violin "pure and simple," "do you happen to know one whom I heard the other day playing too wonderfully a sonata by Fauré, his name is Frank. . . ." "Oh, he's a horror," replied M. de Charlus, overlooking the rudeness of a contradic-

THE CAPTIVE

tion which implied that his cousin was lacking in taste. "As far as violinists are concerned, I advise you to confine yourself to mine." This paved the way to a fresh exchange of glances, at once furtive and scrutinous, between M. de Charlus and his cousin, for, blushing and seeking by her zeal to atone for her blunder, Mme. de Mortemart went on to suggest to M. de Charlus that she might give a party, to hear Morel play. Now, so far as she was concerned, this party had not the object of bringing an unknown talent into prominence, an object which she would, however, pretend to have in mind, and which was indeed that of M. de Charlus. She regarded it only as an opportunity for giving a particularly smart party and was calculating already whom she would invite and whom she would reject. This business of selection, the chief preoccupation of people who give parties (even the people whom "society" journalists are so impudent or so foolish as to call "the élite"), alters at once the expression—and the handwriting—of a hostess more profoundly than any hypnotic suggestion. Before she had even thought of what Morel was to play (which she regarded, and rightly, as a secondary consideration, for even if everybody this evening, from fear of M. de Charlus, had observed a polite silence during the music, it would never have occurred to anyone to listen to it), Mme. de Mortemart, having decided that Mme. de Valcourt was not to be one of the elect, had automatically assumed that air of conspiracy, of a secret plotting which so degrades even those women in society who can most easily afford to ignore what "people will say." "Wouldn't it be possible for me to give a party, for people to hear your friend play?" murmured Mme. de Mortemart, who,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

while addressing herself exclusively to M. de Charlus, could not refrain, as though under a fascination, from casting a glance at Mme. de Valcourt (the rejected) in order to make certain that the other was too far away to hear her. "No she cannot possibly hear what I am saying," Mme. de Mortemart concluded inwardly, reassured by her own glance which as a matter of fact had had a totally different effect upon Mme. de Valcourt from that intended: "Why," Mme. de Valcourt had said to herself when she caught this glance, "Marie-Thérèse is planning something with Palamède which I am not to be told." "You mean my protégé," M. de Charlus corrected, as merciless to his cousin's choice of words as he was to her musical endowments. Then without paying the slightest attention to her silent prayers, as she made a smiling apology: "Why, yes . . ." he said in a loud tone, audible throughout the room, "although there is always a risk in that sort of exportation of a fascinating personality into surroundings that must inevitably diminish his transcendent gifts and would in any case have to be adapted to them." Madame de Mortemart told herself that the aside, the pianissimo of her question had been a waste of trouble, after the megaphone through which the answer had issued. She was mistaken. Mme. de Valcourt heard nothing, for the simple reason that she did not understand a single word. Her anxiety diminished and would rapidly have been extinguished had not Mme. de Mortemart, afraid that she might have been given away and afraid of having to invite Mme. de Valcourt, with whom she was on too intimate terms to be able to leave her out if the other knew about her party beforehand, raised her eyelids once again in Edith's direc-

THE CAPTIVE

tion, as though not to lose sight of a threatening peril, lowering them again briskly so as not to commit herself. She intended, on the morning after the party, to write her one of those letters, the complement of the revealing glance, letters which people suppose to be subtle and which are tantamount to a full and signed confession. For instance: "Dear Edith, I am so sorry about you, I did not really expect you last night" ("How could she have expected me," Edith would ask herself, "since she never invited me?") "as I know that you are not very fond of parties of that sort, which rather bore you. We should have been greatly honoured, all the same, by your company" (never did Mme. de Mortemart employ the word "honoured," except in the letters in which she attempted to cloak a lie in the semblance of truth). "You know that you are always at home in our house. however, you were quite right, as it was a complete failure, like everything that is got up at a moment's notice." But already the second furtive glance darted at her had enabled Edith to grasp everything that was concealed by the complicated language of M. de Charlus. This glance was indeed so violent that, after it had struck Mme. de Valcourt, the obvious secrecy and mischievous intention that it embodied rebounded upon a young Peruvian whom Mme. de Mortemart intended, on the contrary, to invite. But being of a suspicious nature, seeing all too plainly the mystery that was being made without realising that it was not intended to mystify him, he at once conceived a violent hatred of Mme. de Mortemart and determined to play all sorts of tricks upon her, such as ordering fifty iced coffees to be sent to her house on a day when she was not giving a party, or, when she was, inserting a

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

paragraph in the newspapers announcing that the party was postponed, and publishing false reports of her other parties, in which would figure the notorious names of all the people whom, for various reasons, a hostess does not invite or even allow to be introduced to her. Mme. de Mortemart need not have bothered herself about Mme. de Valcourt. M. de Charlus was about to spoil, far more effectively than the other's presence could spoil it, the projected party. "But, my dear cousin," she said in response to the expression "adapting the surroundings," the meaning of which her momentary state of hyperaesthesia had enabled her to discern, "we shall save you all the trouble. I undertake to ask Gilbert to arrange everything." "Not on any account, all the more as he must not be invited to it. Nothing can be arranged except by myself. The first thing is to exclude all the people who have ears and hear not." M. de Charlus's cousin, who had been reckoning upon Morel as an attraction in order to give a party at which she could say that, unlike so many of her kinswomen, she had "had Palamède," carried her thoughts abruptly, from this prestige of M. de Charlus, to all sorts of people with whom he would get her into trouble if he began interfering with the list of her guests. The thought that the Prince de Guermantes (on whose account, partly, she was anxious to exclude Mme. de Valcourt, whom he declined to meet) was not to be invited, alarmed her. Her eyes assumed an uneasy expression. "Is the light, which is rather too strong, hurting you?" inquired M. de Charlus with an apparent seriousness the underlying irony of which she failed to perceive. "No, not at all, I was thinking of the difficulty, not for myself of course, but for my family, if Gilbert were to hear that I had given a

THE CAPTIVE

party without inviting him, when he never has a cat on his housetop without. . . ." "Why of course, we must begin by eliminating the cat on the housetop, which could only miaow; I suppose that the din of talk has prevented you from realising that it was a question not of doing the civilities of a hostess but of proceeding to the rites customary at every true celebration." Then, deciding, not that the next person had been kept waiting too long, but that it did not do to exaggerate the favours shewn to one who had in mind not so much Morel as her own visiting-list, M. de Charlus, like a physician who cuts short a consultation when he considers that it has lasted long enough, gave his cousin a signal to withdraw, not by bidding her good night but by turning to the person immediately behind her. "Good evening, Madame de Montesquiou, marvellous, wasn't it? I have not seen Hélène, tell her that every general abstention, even the most noble, that is to say her own, must include exceptions, if they are brilliant, as has been the case to-night. To shew that one is rare is all very well, but to subordinate one's rarity, which is only negative, to what is precious is better still. In your sister's case, and I value more than anyone her systematic *absence* from places where what is in store for her is not worthy of her, here to-night, on the contrary, her presence at so memorable an exhibition as this would have been a *presidence*, and would have given your sister, already so distinguished, an additional distinction." Then he turned to a third person, M. d'Argencourt. I was greatly astonished to see in this room, as friendly and flattering towards M. de Charlus as he was severe with him elsewhere, insisting upon Morel's being introduced to him and telling him that

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

he hoped he would come and see him, M. d'Argencourt, that terrible scourge of men such as M. de Charlus. At the moment he was living in the thick of them. It was certainly not because he had in any sense become one of them himself. But for some time past he had practically deserted his wife for a young woman in society whom he adored. Being intelligent herself, she made him share her taste for intelligent people, and was most anxious to have M. de Charlus in her house. But above all M. d'Argencourt, extremely jealous and not unduly potent, feeling that he was failing to satisfy his captive and anxious at once to introduce her to people and to keep her amused, could do so without risk to himself only by surrounding her with innocuous men, whom he thus cast for the part of guardians of his seraglio. These men found that he had become quite pleasant and declared that he was a great deal more intelligent than they had supposed, a discovery that delighted him and his mistress.

The remainder of M. de Charlus's guests drifted away fairly rapidly. Several of them said: "I don't want to call at the vestry" (the little room in which the Baron, with Charlie by his side, was receiving congratulations, and to which he himself had given the name), "but I must let Palamède see me so that he shall know that I stayed to the end." Nobody paid the slightest attention to Mme. Verdurin. Some pretended not to know which was she and said good night by mistake to Mme. Cottard, appealing to me for confirmation with a "That is Mme. Verdurin, ain't it?" Mme. d'Arpajon asked me, in the hearing of our hostess: "Tell me, has there ever been a Monsieur Verdurin?" The Duchesses, finding none of the oddities that they expected in this place which they

THE CAPTIVE

had hoped to find more different from anything that they already knew, made the best of a bad job by going into fits of laughter in front of Elstir's paintings; for all the rest of the entertainment, which they found more in keeping than they had expected with the style with which they were familiar, they gave the credit to M. de Charlus, saying: "How clever Palamède is at arranging things; if he were to stage an opera in a stable or a bathroom, it would still be perfectly charming." The most noble ladies were those who shewed most fervour in congratulating M. de Charlus upon the success of a party, of the secret motive of which some of them were by no means unaware, without, however, being embarrassed by the knowledge, this class of society—remembering perhaps certain epochs in history when their own family had already arrived at an identical stage of brazenly conscious effrontery—carrying their contempt for scruples almost as far as their respect for etiquette. Several of them engaged Charlie on the spot for different evenings on which he was to come and play them Vinteuil's septet, but it never occurred to any of them to invite Mme. Verdurin. This last was already blind with fury when M. de Charlus who, his head in the clouds, was incapable of perceiving her condition, decided that it would be only decent to invite the Mistress to share his joy. And it was perhaps yielding to his literary preciosity rather than to an overflow of pride that this specialist in artistic entertainments said to Mme. Verdurin: "Well, are you satisfied? I think you have reason to be; you see that when I set to work to give a party there are no half-measures. I do not know whether your heraldic knowledge enables you to gauge the precise importance of the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

display, the weight that I have lifted, the volume of air that I have displaced for you. You have had the Queen of Naples, the brother of the King of Bavaria, the three premier peers. If Vinteuil is Mahomet, we may say that we have brought to him some of the least movable of mountains. Bear in mind that to attend your party the Queen of Naples has come up from Neuilly, which is a great deal more difficult for her than evacuating the Two Sicilies," he went on, with a deliberate sneer, notwithstanding his admiration for the Queen. "It is an historic event. Just think that it is perhaps the first time she has gone anywhere since the fall of Gaeta. It is probable that the dictionaries of dates will record as culminating points the day of the fall of Gaeta and that of the Verdurins' party. The fan that she laid down, the better to applaud Vinteuil, deserves to become more famous than the fan that Mme. de Metternich broke because the audience hissed Wagner." "Why, she has left it here," said Mme. Verdurin, momentarily appeased by the memory of the Queen's kindness to herself, and she shewed M. de Charlus the fan which was lying upon a chair. "Oh! What a touching spectacle!" exclaimed M. de Charlus, approaching the relic with veneration. "It is all the more touching, it is so hideous; poor little Violette is incredible!" And spasms of emotion and irony coursed through him alternately. "Oh dear, I don't know whether you feel this sort of thing as I do. Swann would positively have died of convulsions if he had seen it. I am sure, whatever price it fetches, I shall buy the fan at the Queen's sale. For she is bound to be sold up, she hasn't a penny," he went on, for he never ceased to intersperse the cruellest slanders with

THE CAPTIVE

the most sincere veneration, albeit these sprang from two opposing natures, which, however, were combined in himself. They might even be brought to bear alternately upon the same incident. For M. de Charlus who in his comfortable state as a wealthy man ridiculed the poverty of the Queen was himself often to be heard extolling that poverty and, when anyone spoke of Princesse Murat, Queen of the Two Sicilies, would reply: "I do not know to whom you are alluding. There is only one Queen of Naples, who is a sublime person and does not keep a carriage. But from her omnibus she annihilates every vehicle on the street and one could kneel down in the dust on seeing her drive past." "I shall bequeath it to a museum. In the meantime, it must be sent back to her, so that she need not hire a cab to come and fetch it. The wisest thing, in view of the historical interest of such an object, would be to steal the fan. But that would be awkward for her—since it is probable that she does not possess another!" he added, with a shout of laughter. "Anyhow, you see that for my sake she came. And that is not the only miracle that I have performed. I do not believe that anyone at the present day has the power to move the people whom I have brought here. However, everyone must be given his due. Charlie and the rest of the musicians played divinely. And, my dear Mistress," he added condescendingly, "you yourself have played your part on this occasion. Your name will not be unrecorded. History has preserved that of the page who armed Joan of Arc when she set out for battle; indeed you have served as a connecting link, you have made possible the fusion between Vinteuil's music and its inspired interpreter, you have had the intelligence to appre-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

ciate the capital importance of the whole chain of circumstances which would enable the interpreter to benefit by the whole weight of a considerable—if I were not referring to myself, I would say providential—personage, whom you were clever enough to ask to ensure the success of the gathering, to bring before Morel's violin the ears directly attached to the tongues that have the widest hearing; no, no, it is not a small matter. There can be no small matter in so complete a realisation. Everything has its part. The Duras was marvellous. In fact, everything; that is why," he concluded, for he loved to administer a rebuke, "I set my face against your inviting those persons—divisors who, among the overwhelming people whom I brought you would have played the part of the decimal points in a sum, reducing the others to a merely fractional value. I have a very exact appreciation of that sort of thing. You understand, we must avoid blunders when we are giving a party which ought to be worthy of Vinteuil, of his inspired interpreter, of yourself, and, I venture to say, of me. You were prepared to invite the Molé, and everything would have been spoiled. It would have been the little contrary, neutralising drop which deprives a potion of its virtue. The electric lights would have fused, the pastry would not have come in time, the orangeade would have given everybody a stomach-ache. She was the one person not to invite. At the mere sound of her name, as in a fairy-tale, not a note would have issued from the brass; the flute and the hautboy would have been stricken with a sudden silence. Morel himself, even if he had succeeded in playing a few bars, would not have been in tune, and instead of Vinteuil's septet you would have had a parody of it by Beckmesser,

THE CAPTIVE

ending amid catcalls. I, who believe strongly in personal influence, could feel quite plainly in the expansion of a certain largo, which opened itself right out like a flower, in the supreme satisfaction of the finale, which was not merely allegro but incomparably allegro, that the absence of the Molé was inspiring the musicians and was diffusing joy among the very instruments themselves. In any case, when one is at home to Queens one does not invite one's hall-portress." In calling her "the Molé" (as for that matter he said quite affectionately "the Duras") M. de Charlus was doing the lady justice. For all these women were the actresses of society and it is true also that, even regarding her from this point of view, Comtesse Molé did not justify the extraordinary reputation for intelligence that she had acquired, which made one think of those mediocre actors or novelists who, at certain periods, are hailed as men of genius, either because of the mediocrity of their competitors, among whom there is no artist capable of revealing what is meant by true talent, or because of the mediocrity of the public, which, did there exist an extraordinary individuality, would be incapable of understanding it. In Mme. Molé's case it is preferable, if not absolutely fair, to stop at the former explanation. The social world being the realm of nullity, there exist between the merits of women in society only insignificant degrees, which are at best capable of rousing to madness the rancours or the imagination of M. de Charlus. And certainly, if he spoke as he had just been speaking in this language which was a precious alloy of artistic and social elements, it was because his old-womanly anger and his culture as a man of the world furnished the genuine eloquence that he possessed with

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

none but insignificant themes. Since the world of differences does not exist on the surface of the earth, among all the countries which our perception renders uniform, all the more reason why it should not exist in the social "world." Does it exist anywhere else? Vinteuil's septet had seemed to tell me that it did. But where? As M. de Charlus also enjoyed repeating what one person had said of another, seeking to stir up quarrels, to divide and reign, he added: "You have, by not inviting her, deprived Mme. Molé of the opportunity of saying: 'I can't think why this Mme. Verdurin should invite me. I can't imagine who these people are, I don't know them.' She was saying a year ago that you were boring her with your advances. She's a fool, never invite her again. After all, she's nothing so very wonderful. She can come to your house without making a fuss about it, seeing that I come here. In short," he concluded, "it seems to me that you have every reason to thank me, for, so far as it went, everything has been perfect. The Duchesse de Guermantes did not come, but one can't tell, it was better perhaps that she didn't. We shan't bear her any grudge, and we shall remember her all the same another time, not that one can help remembering her, her very eyes say to us 'Forget me not!', for they are a pair of myosotes" (here I thought to myself how strong the Guermantes spirit—the decision to go to one house and not to another—must be, to have outweighed in the Duchess's mind her fear of Palamède). "In the face of so complete a success, one is tempted like Bernardin de Saint-Pierre to see everywhere the hand of Providence. The Duchesse de Duras was enchanted. She even asked me to tell you so," added M. de Charlus, dwelling upon the words as

THE CAPTIVE

though Mme. Verdurin must regard this as a sufficient honour. Sufficient and indeed barely credible, for he found it necessary, if he was to be believed, to add, completely carried away by the madness of those whom Jupiter has decided to ruin: "She has engaged Morel to come to her house, where the same programme will be repeated, and I even think of asking her for an invitation for M. Verdurin." This civility to the husband alone was, although no such idea even occurred to M. de Charlus, the most wounding outrage to the wife who, believing herself to possess, with regard to the violinist, by virtue of a sort of ukase which prevailed in the little clan, the right to forbid him to perform elsewhere without her express authorisation, was fully determined to forbid his appearance at Mme. de Duras's party.

The Baron's volubility was in itself an irritation to Mme. Verdurin who did not like people to form independent groups within their little clan. How often, even at la Raspelière, hearing M. de Charlus talking incessantly to Charlie instead of being content with taking his part in the so harmonious chorus of the clan, she had pointed to him and exclaimed: "What a rattle¹ he is! What a rattle! Oh, if it comes to rattles, he's a famous rattle!" But this time it was far worse. Inebriated with the sound of his own voice, M. de Charlus failed to realise that by cutting down the part assigned to Mme. Verdurin and confining it within narrow limits, he was calling forth that feeling of hatred which was in her only a special, social form of jealousy. Mme. Verdurin was genuinely fond of her regular visitors, the faithful of the little clan,

¹ Mme. Verdurin uses here the word *tapette*, being probably unaware of its popular meaning. C. K. S. M.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

but wished them to be entirely devoted to their Mistress. Willing to make some sacrifice, like those jealous lovers who will tolerate a betrayal, but only under their own roof and even before their eyes, that is to say when there is no betrayal, she would allow the men to have mistresses, lovers, on condition that the affair had no social consequence outside her own house, that the tie was formed and perpetuated in the shelter of her Wednesdays. In the old days, every furtive peal of laughter that came from Odette when she conversed with Swann had gnawed her heartstrings, and so of late had every aside exchanged by Morel and the Baron; she found one consolation alone for her griefs which was to destroy the happiness of other people. She had not been able to endure for long that of the Baron. And here was this rash person precipitating the catastrophe by appearing to be restricting the Mistress's place in her little clan. Already she could see Morel going into society, without her, under the Baron's aegis. There was but a single remedy, to make Morel choose between the Baron and herself, and, relying upon the ascendancy that she had acquired over Morel by the display that she made of an extraordinary perspicacity, thanks to reports which she collected, to falsehoods which she invented, all of which served to corroborate what he himself was led to believe, and what would in time be made plain to him, thanks to the pitfalls which she was preparing, into which her unsuspecting victims would fall, relying upon this ascendancy, to make him choose herself in preference to the Baron. As for the society ladies who had been present and had not even asked to be introduced to her, as soon as she grasped their hesitations or indifference, she had said: "Ah! I see what

THE CAPTIVE

they are, the sort of old good-for-nothings that are not our style, it's the last time they shall set foot in this house." For she would have died rather than admit that anyone had been less friendly to her than she had hoped. "Ah! My dear General," M. de Charlus suddenly exclaimed, abandoning Mme. Verdurin, as he caught sight of General Deltour, Secretary to the President of the Republic, who might be of great value in securing Charlie his Cross, and who, after asking some question of Cottard, was rapidly withdrawing: "Good evening, my dear, delightful friend. So this is how you slip away without saying good-bye to me," said the Baron with a genial, self-satisfied smile, for he knew quite well that people were always glad to stay behind for a moment to talk to himself. And as, in his present state of excitement, he would answer his own questions in a shrill tone: "Well, did you enjoy it? Wasn't it really fine? The *andante*, what? It's the most touching thing that was ever written. I defy anyone to listen to the end without tears in his eyes. Charming of you to have come. Listen, I had the most perfect telegram this morning from Froberville, who tells me that as far as the Grand Chancery goes the difficulties have been smoothed away, as the saying is." M. de Charlus's voice continued to soar at this piercing pitch, as different from his normal voice as is that of a barrister making an emphatic plea from his ordinary utterance, a phenomenon of vocal amplification by over-excitement and nervous tension analogous to that which, at her own dinner-parties, raised to so high a diapason the voice and gaze alike of Mme. de Guermantes. "I intended to send you a note to-morrow by a messenger to tell you of my enthusiasm, until I

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

could find an opportunity of speaking to you, but you have been so surrounded! Froberville's support is not to be despised, but for my own part, I have the Minister's promise," said the General. "Ah! Excellent. Besides, you have seen for yourself that it is only what such talent deserves. Hoyos was delighted, I didn't manage to see the Ambassadors, was she pleased? Who would not have been, except those that have ears and hear not, which does not matter so long as they have tongues and can speak." Taking advantage of the Baron's having withdrawn to speak to the general, Mme. Verdurin made a signal to Brichot. He, not knowing what Mme. Verdurin was going to say, sought to amuse her, and never suspecting the anguish that he was causing me, said to the Mistress: "The Baron is delighted that Mlle. Vinteuil and her friend did not come. They shock him terribly. He declares that their morals are appalling. You can't imagine how prudish and severe the Baron is on moral questions." Contrary to Brichot's expectation, Mme. Verdurin was not amused: "He is obscene," was her answer. "Take him out of the room to smoke a cigarette with you, so that my husband can get hold of his Dulcinea without his noticing it and warn him of the abyss that is yawning at his feet." Brichot seemed to hesitate. "I don't mind telling you," Mme. Verdurin went on, to remove his final scruples, "that I do not feel at all safe with a man like that in the house. I know, there are all sorts of horrible stories about him, and the police have him under supervision." And, as she possessed a certain talent of improvisation when inspired by malice, Mme. Verdurin did not stop at this: "It seems, he has been in prison. Yes, yes, I have been told by people who

THE CAPTIVE

knew all about it. I know, too, from a person who lives in his street, that you can't imagine the ruffians that go to his house." And as Brichot, who often went to the Baron's, began to protest, Mme. Verdurin, growing animated, exclaimed: "But I can assure you! It is I who am telling you," an expression with which she habitually sought to give weight to an assertion flung out more or less at random. "He will be found murdered in his bed one of these days, as those people always are. He may not go quite as far as that perhaps, because he is in the clutches of that Jupien whom he had the impudence to send to me, and who is an ex-convict, I know it, you yourself know it, yes, for certain. He has a hold on him because of some letters which are perfectly appalling, it seems. I know it from somebody who has seen them, and told me: 'You would be sick on the spot if you saw them.' That is how Jupien makes him toe the line and gets all the money he wants out of him. I would sooner die a thousand times over than live in a state of terror like Charlus. In any case, if Morel's family decides to bring an action against him, I have no desire to be dragged in as an accomplice. If he goes on, it will be at his own risk, but I shall have done my duty. What is one to do? It's no joke, I can tell you." And, agreeably warmed already by the thought of her husband's impending conversation with the violinist, Mme. Verdurin said to me: "Ask Brichot whether I am not a courageous friend, and whether I am not capable of sacrificing myself to save my comrades." (She was alluding to the circumstances in which she had, just in time, made him quarrel, first of all with his laundress, and then with Mme. de Cambremer, quarrels as a result of which Brichot had

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

become almost completely blind, and (people said) had taken to morphia.) "An incomparable friend, far-sighted and valiant," replied the Professor with an innocent emotion. "Mme. Verdurin prevented me from doing something extremely foolish," Brichot told me when she had left us. "She never hesitates to operate without anaesthetics. She is an interventionist, as our friend Cottard says. I admit, however, that the thought that the poor Baron is still unconscious of the blow that is going to fall upon him distresses me deeply. He is quite mad about that boy. If Mme. Verdurin should prove successful, there is a man who is going to be very miserable. However, it is not certain that she will not fail. I am afraid that she may only succeed in creating a misunderstanding between them, which, in the end, without parting them, will only make them quarrel with her." It was often thus with Mme. Verdurin and her faithful. But it was evident that in her the need to preserve their friendship was more and more dominated by the requirement that this friendship should never be challenged by that which they might feel for one another. Homosexuality did not disgust her so long as it did not tamper with orthodoxy, but like the Church she preferred any sacrifice rather than a concession of orthodoxy. I was beginning to be afraid lest her irritation with myself might be due to her having heard that I had prevented Albertine from going to her that afternoon, and that she might presently set to work, if she had not already begun, upon the same task of separating her from me which her husband, in the case of Charlus, was now going to attempt with the musician. "Come along, get hold of Charlus, find some excuse, there's no time to lose," said Mme. Verdurin, "and

THE CAPTIVE

whatever you do, don't let him come back here until I send for you. Oh! What an evening," Mme. Verdurin went on, revealing thus the true cause of her anger. "Performing a masterpiece in front of those wooden images. I don't include the Queen of Naples, she is intelligent, she is a nice woman" (which meant: "She has been kind to me"). "But the others. Oh! It's enough to drive anyone mad. What you can expect, I'm no longer a girl. When I was young, people told me that one must put up with boredom, I made an effort, but now, oh no, it's too much for me, I am old enough to please myself, life is too short; bore myself, listen to idiots, smile, pretend to think them intelligent. No, I can't do it. Get along, Brichot, there's no time to lose." "I am going, Madame, I am going," said Brichot, as General Deltour moved away. But first of all the Professor took me aside for a moment: "Moral Duty," he said, "is less clearly imperative than our Ethics teach us. Whatever the Theosophical cafés and the Kantian beer-houses may say, we are deplorably ignorant of the nature of Good. I myself who, without wishing to boast, have lectured to my pupils, in all innocence, upon the philosophy of the said Immanuel Kant, I can see no precise ruling for the case of social casuistry with which I am now confronted in that Critique of Practical Reason in which the great renegade of Protestantism platonised in the German manner for a Germany prehistorically sentimental and aulic, ringing all the changes of a Pomeranian mysticism. It is still the Symposium, but held this time at Königsberg, in the local style, indigestible and reeking of sauerkraut, and without any good-looking boys. It is obvious on the one hand that I cannot refuse our excellent hostess

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the small service that she asks of me, in a fully orthodox conformity with traditional morals. One ought to avoid, above all things, for there are few that involve one in more foolish speeches, letting oneself be lured by words. But after all, let us not hesitate to admit that if the mothers of families were entitled to vote, the Baron would run the risk of being lamentably blackballed for the Chair of Virtue. It is unfortunately with the temperament of a rake that he pursues the vocation of a pedagogue; observe that I am not speaking evil of the Baron; that good man, who can carve a joint like nobody in the world, combines with a genius for anathema treasures of goodness. He can be most amusing as a superior sort of wag, whereas with a certain one of my colleagues, an Academician, if you please, I am bored, as Xenophon would say, at a hundred drachmae to the hour. But I am afraid that he is expending upon Morel rather more than a wholesome morality enjoins, and without knowing to what extent the young penitent shews himself docile or rebellious to the special exercises which his catechist imposes upon him by way of mortification, one need not be a learned clerk to be aware that we should be erring, as the other says, on the side of clemency with regard to this Rosicrucian who seems to have come down to us from Petronius, by way of Saint-Simon, if we granted him with our eyes shut, duly signed and sealed, permission to satanise. And yet, in keeping the man occupied while Mme. Verdurin, for the sinner's good and indeed rightly tempted by such a cure of souls, proceeds—by speaking to the young fool without any concealment—to remove from him all that he loves, to deal him perhaps a fatal blow, it seems to me that I am leading him into what

THE CAPTIVE

one might call a man-trap, and I recoil as though from a base action." This said, he did not hesitate to commit it, but, taking him by the arm, began: "Come, Baron, let us go and smoke a cigarette, this young man has not yet seen all the marvels of the house." I made the excuse that I was obliged to go home. "Just wait a moment," said Brichot. "You remember, you are giving me a lift, and I have not forgotten your promise." "Wouldn't you like me, really, to make them bring out their plate, nothing could be simpler," said M. de Charlus. "You promised me, remember, not a word about Morel's decoration. I mean to give him the surprise of announcing it presently when people have begun to leave, although he says that it is of no importance to an artist, but that his uncle would like him to have it" (I blushed, for, I thought to myself, the Verdurins would know through my grandfather what Morel's uncle was). "Then you wouldn't like me to make them bring out the best pieces," said M. de Charlus. "Of course, you know them already, you have seen them a dozen times at la Raspelière." I dared not tell him that what might have interested me was not the mediocrity of even the most splendid plate in a middle-class household, but some specimen, were it only reproduced in a fine engraving, of Mme. Du Barry's. I was far too gravely preoccupied—even if I had not been by this revelation as to Mlle. Vinteuil's expected presence—always, in society, far too much distracted and agitated to fasten my attention upon objects that were more or less beautiful. It could have been arrested only by the appeal of some reality that addressed itself to my imagination, as might have been, this evening, a picture of that Venice of which I had thought so much

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

during the afternoon, or some general element, common to several forms and more genuine than they, which, of its own accord, never failed to arouse in me an inward appreciation, normally lulled in slumber, the rising of which to the surface of my consciousness filled me with great joy. Well, as I emerged from the room known as the concert-room, and crossed the other drawing-rooms with Brichot and M. de Charlus, on discovering, transposed among others, certain pieces of furniture which I had seen at la Raspelière and to which I had paid no attention, I perceived, between the arrangement of the town house and that of the country house, a certain common air of family life, a permanent identity, and I understood what Brichot meant when he said to me with a smile: "There, look at this room, it may perhaps give you an idea of what things were like in Rue Montalivet, twenty-five years ago." From his smile, a tribute to the defunct drawing-room which he saw with his mind's eye, I understood that what Brichot, perhaps without realising it, preferred in the old room, more than the large windows, more than the gay youth of his hosts and their faithful, was that unreal part (which I myself could discern from some similarities between la Raspelière and Quai Conti) of which, in a drawing-room as in everything else, the external, actual part, liable to everyone's control, is but the prolongation, was that part become purely imaginary, of a colour which no longer existed save for my elderly guide, which he was incapable of making me see, that part which has detached itself from the outer world, to take refuge in our soul, to which it gives a surplus value, in which it is assimilated to its normal substance, transforming itself—houses that have been pulled down, people

THE CAPTIVE

long dead, bowls of fruit at the suppers which we recall—into that translucent alabaster of our memories, the colour of which we are incapable of displaying, since we alone see it, which enables us to say truthfully to other people, speaking of things past, that they cannot form any idea of them, that they do not resemble anything that they have seen, while we are unable to think of them ourself without a certain emotion, remembering that it is upon the existence of our thoughts that there depends, for a little time still, their survival, the brilliance of the lamps that have been extinguished and the fragrance of the arbours that will never bloom again. And possibly, for this reason, the drawing-room in Rue Montalivet disparaged, for Brichot, the Verdurins' present home. But on the other hand it added to this home, in the Professor's eyes, a beauty which it could not have in those of a stranger. Those pieces of the original furniture that had been transported here, and sometimes arranged in the same groups, and which I myself remembered from la Raspelière, introduced into the new drawing-room fragments of the old which, at certain moments, recalled it so vividly as to create a hallucination and then seemed themselves scarcely real from having evoked in the midst of the surrounding reality fragments of a vanished world which seemed to extend round about them. A sofa that had risen up from dreamland between a pair of new and thoroughly substantial armchairs, smaller chairs upholstered in pink silk, the cloth surface of a card-table raised to the dignity of a person since, like a person, it had a past, a memory, retaining in the chill and gloom of Quai Conti the tan of its roasting by the sun through the windows of Rue Montalivet (where

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

it could tell the time of day as accurately as Mme. Verdurin herself) and through the glass doors at la Raspelière, where they had taken it and where it used to gaze out all day long over the flower-beds of the garden at the valley far below, until it was time for Cottard and the musician to sit down to their game; a posy of violets and pansies in pastel, the gift of a painter friend, now dead, the sole fragment that survived of a life that had vanished without leaving any trace, summarising a great talent and a long friendship, recalling his keen, gentle eyes, his shapely hand, plump and melancholy, while he was at work on it; the incoherent, charming disorder of the offerings of the faithful, which have followed the lady of the house on all her travels and have come in time to assume the fixity of a trait of character, of a line of destiny; a profusion of cut flowers, of chocolate-boxes which here as in the country systematised their growth in an identical mode of blossoming; the curious interpolation of those singular and superfluous objects which still appear to have been just taken from the box in which they were offered and remain for ever what they were at first, New Year's Day presents; all those things, in short, which one could not have isolated from the rest, but which for Brichot, an old frequenter of the Verdurin parties, had that patina, that velvety bloom of things to which, giving them a sort of profundity, an astral body has been added; all these things scattered before him, sounded in his ear like so many resonant keys which awakened cherished likenesses in his heart, confused reminiscences which, here in this drawing-room of the present day that was littered with them, cut out, defined, as on a fine day a shaft of sunlight cuts a section in the atmosphere, the furniture

THE CAPTIVE

and carpets, and pursuing it from a cushion to a flower-stand, from a footstool to a lingering scent, from the lighting arrangements to the colour scheme, carved, evoked, spiritualised, called to life a form which might be called the ideal aspect, immanent in each of their successive homes, of the Verdurin drawing-room. "We must try," Brichot whispered in my ear, "to get the Baron upon his favourite topic. He is astounding." Now on the one hand I was glad of an opportunity to try to obtain from M. de Charlus information as to the coming of Mlle. Vinteuil and her friend. On the other hand, I did not wish to leave Albertine too long by herself, not that she could (being uncertain of the moment of my return, not to mention that, at so late an hour, she could not have received a visitor or left the house herself without arousing comment) make any evil use of my absence, but simply so that she might not find it too long. And so I told Brichot and M. de Charlus that I must shortly leave them. "Come with us all the same," said the Baron, whose social excitement was beginning to flag, but feeling that need to prolong, to spin out a conversation, which I had already observed in the Duchesse de Guermantes as well as in himself, and which, while distinctive of their family, extends in a more general fashion to all those people who, offering their minds no other realisation than talk, that is to say an imperfect realisation, remain unassuaged even after hours spent in one's company, and attach themselves more and more hungrily to their exhausted companion, from whom they mistakenly expect a satiety which social pleasures are incapable of giving. "Come, won't you," he repeated, "this is the pleasant moment at a party, the moment when all

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the guests have gone, the hour of Doña Sol; let us hope that it will end less tragically. Unfortunately you are in a hurry, in a hurry probably to go and do things which you would much better leave undone. People are always in a hurry and leave at the time when they ought to be arriving. We are here like Couture's philosophers, this is the moment in which to go over the events of the evening, to make what is called in military language a criticism of the operations. We might ask Mme. Verdurin to send us in a little supper to which we should take care not to invite her, and we might request Charlie—still *Hernani*—to play for ourselves alone the sublime adagio. Isn't it fine, that adagio? But where is the young violinist, I would like to congratulate him, this is the moment for tender words and embraces. Admit, Brichot, that they played like gods, Morel especially. Did you notice the moment when that lock of hair came loose? Ah, then, my dear fellow, you saw nothing at all. There was an F sharp at which Enesco, Capet and Thibaut might have died of jealousy; I may have appeared calm enough, I can tell you that at such a sound my heart was so wrung that I could barely control my tears. The whole room sat breathless; Brichot, my dear fellow," cried the Baron, gripping the other's arm which he shook violently, "it was sublime. Only young Charlie preserved a stony immobility, you could not even see him breathe, he looked like one of those objects of the inanimate world of which Théodore Rousseau speaks, which make us think, but do not think themselves. And then, all of a sudden," cried M. de Charlus with enthusiasm, making a pantomime gesture, "then . . . the Lock! And all the time, the charming

THE CAPTIVE

little country-dance of the allegro vivace. You know, that lock was the symbol of the revelation, even to the most obtuse. The Princess of Taormina, deaf until then, for there are none so deaf as those that have ears and hear not, the Princess of Taormina, confronted by the message of the miraculous lock, realised that it was music that they were playing and not poker. Oh, that was indeed a solemn moment." "Excuse me, Sir, for interrupting you," I said to M. de Charlus, hoping to bring him to the subject in which I was interested, "you told me that the composer's daughter was to be present. I should have been most interested to meet her. Are you certain that she was expected?" "Oh, that I can't say." M. de Charlus thus complied, perhaps unconsciously, with that universal rule by which people withhold information from a jealous lover, whether in order to shew an absurd "comradeship," as a point of honour, and even if they detest her, with the woman who has excited his jealousy, or out of malice towards her, because they guess that jealousy can only intensify love, or from that need to be disagreeable to other people which consists in revealing the truth to the rest of the world but concealing it from the jealous, ignorance increasing their torment, or so at least the tormentors suppose, who, in their desire to hurt other people are guided by what they themselves believe, wrongly perhaps, to be most painful. "You know," he went on, "in this house they are a trifle prone to exaggerate, they are charming people, still they do like to catch celebrities of one sort or another. But you are not looking well, and you will catch cold in this damp room," he said, pushing a chair towards me. "Since you have not been well, you must take care of yourself, let me go

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

and find you your coat. No, don't go for it yourself, you will lose your way and catch cold. How careless people are; you might be an infant in arms, you want an old nurse like me to look after you." "Don't trouble, Baron, let me go," said Brichot, and left us immediately; not being precisely aware perhaps of the very warm affection that M. de Charlus felt for me and of the charming lapses into simplicity and devotion that alternated with his delirious crises of grandeur and persecution, he was afraid that M. de Charlus, whom Mme. Verdurin had entrusted like a prisoner to his vigilance, might simply be seeking, under the pretext of asking for my greatcoat, to return to Morel and might thus upset the Mistress's plan.

Meanwhile Ski had sat down, uninvited, at the piano, and assuming—with a playful knitting of his brows, a remote gaze and a slight twist of his lips—what he imagined to be an artistic air, was insisting that Morel should play something by Bizet. "What, you don't like it, that boyish music of Bizet. Why, my dearr fellow," he said, with that rolling of the letter *r* which was one of his peculiarities, "it's rravishing." Morel, who did not like Bizet, said so in exaggerated terms and (as he had the reputation in the little clan of being, though it seems incredible, a wit) Ski, pretending to take the violinist's diatribes as paradoxes, bursts out laughing. His laugh was not, like M. Verdurin's, the stifled gasp of a smoker. Ski first of all assumed a subtle air, then allowed to escape, as though against his will, a single note of laughter, like the first clang from a belfry, followed by a silence in which the subtle gaze seemed to be making a competent examination of the absurdity of what had been said, then a

THE CAPTIVE

second peal of laughter shook the air, followed presently by a merry angelus.

I expressed to M. de Charlus my regret that M. Brichot should be taking so much trouble. "Not at all, he is delighted, he is very fond of you, everyone is fond of you. Somebody was saying only the other day: 'We never see him now, he is isolating himself!' Besides, he is such a good fellow, is Brichot," M. de Charlus went on, never suspecting probably, in view of the affectionate, frank manner in which the Professor of Moral Philosophy conversed with him, that he had no hesitation in slandering him behind his back. "He is a man of great merit, immensely learned, and not a bit spoiled, his learning hasn't turned him into a bookworm, like so many of them who smell of ink. He has retained a breadth of outlook, a tolerance, rare in his kind. Sometimes, when one sees how well he understands life, with what a natural grace he renders everyone his due, one asks oneself where a humble little Sorbonne professor, an ex-school-master, can have picked up such breeding. I am astonished at it myself." I was even more astonished when I saw the conversation of this Brichot, which the least refined of Mme. de Guermantes's friends would have found so dull, so heavy, please the most critical of them all, M. de Charlus. But to achieve this result there had collaborated, among other influences, themselves distinct also, those by virtue of which Swann, on the one hand, had so long found favour with the little clan, when he was in love with Odette, and on the other hand, after he married, found an attraction in Mme. Bontemps who, pretending to adore the Swann couple, came incessantly to call upon the wife and revelled in all the stories about

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the husband. Just as a writer gives the palm for intelligence, not to the most intelligent man, but to the worldling who utters a bold and tolerant comment upon the passion of a man for a woman, a comment which makes the writer's blue-stockings mistress agree with him in deciding that of all the people who come to her house the least stupid is after all this old beau who shews experience in the things of love, so M. de Charlus found more intelligent than the rest of his friends Brichot, who was not merely kind to Morel, but would cull from the Greek philosophers, the Latin poets, the authors of Oriental tales, appropriate texts which decorated the Baron's propensity with a strange and charming anthology. M. de Charlus had reached the age at which a Victor Hugo chooses to surround himself, above all, with Vacquieries and Meurices. He preferred to all others those men who tolerated his outlook upon life. "I see a great deal of him," he went on, in a balanced, sing-song tone, allowing no movement of his lips to stir his grave, powdered mask over which were purposely lowered his prelatical eyelids. "I attend his lectures, that atmosphere of the Latin Quarter refreshes me, there is a studious, thoughtful adolescence of young bourgeois, more intelligent, better read than were, in a different sphere, my own contemporaries. It is a different world, which you know probably better than I, they are young *bourgeois*," he said, detaching the last word to which he prefixed a string of *bs*, and emphasising it from a sort of habit of elocution, corresponding itself to a taste for fine distinctions in past history, which was peculiar to him, but perhaps also from inability to resist the pleasure of giving me a flick of his insolence. This did not in any way diminish the great and affection-

THE CAPTIVE

ate pity that was inspired in me by M. de Charlus (after Mme. Verdurin had revealed her plan in my hearing), it merely amused me, and indeed on any other occasion, when I should not have felt so kindly disposed towards him, would not have offended me. I derived from my grandmother such an absence of any self-importance that I might easily be found wanting in dignity. Doubtless, I was scarcely aware of this, and by dint of having seen and heard, from my schooldays onwards, my most esteemed companions take offence if anyone failed to keep an appointment, refuse to overlook any disloyal behaviour, I had come in time to exhibit in my speech and actions a second nature which was stamped with pride. It was indeed considered extremely proud, because, as I had never been timid, I had been easily led into duels, the moral prestige of which, however, I diminished by making little of them, which easily persuaded other people that they were absurd; but the true nature which we trample underfoot continues nevertheless to abide within us. Thus it is that at times, if we read the latest masterpiece of a man of genius, we are delighted to find in it all those of our own reflexions which we have always despised, joys and sorrows which we have repressed, a whole world of feelings scorned by us, the value of which the book in which we discover them afresh at once teaches us. I had come in time to learn from my experience of life that it was a mistake to smile a friendly smile when somebody made a fool of me, instead of feeling annoyed. But this want of self-importance and resentment, if I had so far ceased to express it as to have become almost entirely unaware that it existed in me, was nevertheless the primitive, vital element in

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

which I was steeped. Anger and spite came to me only in a wholly different manner, in furious crises. What was more, the sense of justice was so far lacking in me as to amount to an entire want of moral sense. I was in my heart of hearts entirely won over to the side of the weaker party, and of anyone who was in trouble. I had no opinion as to the proportion in which good and evil might be blended in the relations between Morel and M. de Charlus, but the thought of the sufferings that were being prepared for M. de Charlus was intolerable to me. I would have liked to warn him; but did not know how to do it. "The spectacle of all that laborious little world is very pleasant to an old stick like myself. I do not know them," he went on, raising his hand with an air of reserve—so as not to appear to be boasting of his own conquests, to testify to his own purity and not to allow any suspicion to rest upon that of the students—"but they are most civil, they often go so far as to keep a place for me, since I am a very old gentleman. Yes indeed, my dear boy, do not protest, I am past forty," said the Baron, who was past sixty. "It is a trifle stuffy in the hall in which Brichot lectures, but it is always interesting." Albeit the Baron preferred to mingle with the youth of the schools, in other words to be jostled by them, sometimes, to save him a long wait in the lecture-room, Brichot took him in by his own door. Brichot might well be at home in the Sorbonne, at the moment when the janitor, loaded with chains of office, stepped out before him, and the master admired by his young pupils followed, he could not repress a certain timidity, and much as he desired to profit by that moment in which he felt himself so important to shew consideration for Charlus, he was neverthe-

THE CAPTIVE

less slightly embarrassed; so that the janitor should allow him to pass, he said to him, in an artificial tone and with a preoccupied air: "Follow me, Baron, they'll find a place for you," then, without paying any more attention to him, to make his own entry, he advanced by himself briskly along the corridor. On either side, a double hedge of young lecturers greeted him; Brichot, anxious not to appear to be posing in the eyes of these young men to whom he knew that he was a great pontiff, bestowed on them a thousand glances, a thousand little nods of connivence, to which his desire to remain martial, thoroughly French, gave the effect of a sort of cordial encouragement by an old soldier saying: "Damn it all, we can face the foe." Then the applause of his pupils broke out. Brichot sometimes extracted from this attendance by M. de Charlus at his lectures an opportunity for giving pleasure, almost for returning hospitality. He would say to some parent, or to one of his middle-class friends: "If it would interest your wife or daughter, I may tell you that the Baron de Charlus, Prince de Carency, a scion of the House of Condé, attends my lectures. It is something to remember, having seen one of the last descendants of our aristocracy who preserves the type. If they care to come, they will know him because he will be sitting next to my chair. Besides he will be alone there, a stout man, with white hair and black moustaches, wearing the military medal." "Oh, thank you," said the father. And, albeit his wife had other engagements, so as not to disoblige Brichot, he made her attend the lecture, while the daughter, troubled by the heat and the crowd, nevertheless devoured eagerly with her eyes the descendant of Condé, marvelling all the same that he was not crowned with

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

strawberry-leaves and looked just like anybody else of the present day. He meanwhile had no eyes for her, but more than one student, who did not know who he was, was amazed at his friendly glances, became self-conscious and stiff, and the Baron left the room full of dreams and melancholy. "Forgive me if I return to the subject," I said quickly to M. de Charlus, for I could hear Brichot returning, "but could you let me know by wire if you should hear that Mlle. Vinteuil or her friend is expected in Paris, letting me know exactly how long they will be staying and without telling anybody that I asked you." I had almost ceased to believe that she had been expected, but I wished to guard myself thus for the future. "Yes, I will do that for you, first of all because I owe you a great debt of gratitude. By not accepting what, long ago, I had offered you, you rendered me, to your own loss, an immense service, you left me my liberty. It is true that I have abdicated it in another fashion," he added in a melancholy tone beneath which was visible a desire to take me into his confidence; "that is what I continue to regard as the important fact, a whole combination of circumstances which you failed to turn to your own account, possibly because fate warned you at that precise minute not to cross my Path. For always man proposes and God disposes. Who knows whether if, on the day when we came away together from Mme. de Villeparisis's, you had accepted, perhaps many things that have since happened would never have occurred?" In some embarrassment, I turned the conversation, seizing hold of the name of Mme. de Villeparisis, and sought to find out from him, so admirably qualified in every respect, for what reasons Mme. de Villeparisis seemed to

THE CAPTIVE

be held aloof by the aristocratic world. Not only did he not give me the solution of this little social problem, he did not even appear to me to be aware of its existence. I then realised that the position of Mme. de Villeparisis, if it was in later years to appear great to posterity, and even in the Marquise's lifetime to the ignorant rich, had appeared no less great at the opposite extremity of society, that which touched Mme. de Villeparisis, that of the Guermantes. She was their aunt; they saw first and foremost birth, connexions by marriage, the opportunity of impressing some sister-in-law with the importance of their own family. They regarded this less from the social than from the family point of view. Now this was more brilliant in the case of Mme. de Villeparisis than I had supposed. I had been impressed when I heard that the title Villeparisis was falsely assumed. But there are other examples of great ladies who have made degrading marriages and preserved a predominant position. M. de Charlus began by informing me that Mme. de Villeparisis was a niece of the famous Duchesse de —, the most celebrated member of the great aristocracy during the July Monarchy, albeit she had refused to associate with the Citizen King and his family. I had so longed to hear stories about this Duchess! And Mme. de Villeparisis, the kind Mme. de Villeparisis, with those cheeks that to me had been the cheeks of an ordinary woman, Mme. de Villeparisis who sent me so many presents and whom I could so easily have seen every day, Mme. de Villeparisis was her niece brought up by her, in her home, at the Hôtel de —. "She asked the Duc de Doudeauville," M. de Charlus told me, "speaking of the three sisters, 'Which of the sisters do you prefer?'"

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

And when Doudeauville said: 'Madame de Villeparisis,' the Duchesse de ——— replied 'Pig!' For the Duchess was extremely *witty*," said M. de Charlus, giving the word the importance and the special pronunciation in use among the Guermantes. That he should have thought the expression so "witty" did not, however, surprise me, for I had on many other occasions remarked the centrifugal, objective tendency which leads men to abdicate, when they are relishing the wit of others, the severity with which they would criticise their own, and to observe, to record faithfully, what they would have scorned to create. "But what on earth is he doing, that is my greatcoat he is bringing," he said, on seeing that Brichot had made so long a search to no better result. "I would have done better to go for it myself. However, you can put it on now. Are you aware that it is highly compromising, my dear boy, it is like drinking out of the same glass, I shall be able to read your thoughts. No, not like that, come, let me do it," and as he put me into his greatcoat, he pressed it down on my shoulders, fastened it round my throat, and brushed my chin with his hand, making the apology: "At his age, he doesn't know how to put on a coat, one has to titivate him, I have missed my vocation, Brichot, I was born to be a nursery-maid." I wanted to go home, but as M. de Charlus had expressed his intention of going in search of Morel, Brichot detained us both. Moreover, the certainty that when I went home I should find Albertine there, a certainty as absolute as that which I had felt in the afternoon that Albertine would return home from the Trocadéro, made me at this moment as little impatient to see her as I had been then when I was sitting at

THE CAPTIVE

the piano, after Françoise had sent me her telephone message. And it was this calm that enabled me, whenever, in the course of this conversation, I attempted to rise, to obey Brichot's injunctions who was afraid that my departure might prevent Charlus from remaining with him until the moment when Mme. Verdurin was to come and fetch us. "Come," he said to the Baron, "stay a little here with us, you shall give him the accolade presently," Brichot added, fastening upon myself his almost sightless eyes to which the many operations that he had undergone had restored some degree of life, but which had not all the same the mobility necessary to the side-long expression of malice. "The accolade, how absurd!" cried the Baron, in a shrill and rapturous tone. "My boy, I tell you, he imagines he is at a prize-giving, he is dreaming of his young pupils. I ask myself whether he don't sleep with them." "You wish to meet Mlle. Vinteuil," said Brichot, who had overheard the last words of our conversation. "I promise to let you know if she comes, I shall hear of it from Mme. Verdurin," for he doubtless foresaw that the Baron was in peril of an immediate exclusion from the little clan. "I see, so you think that I have less claim than yourself upon Mme. Verdurin," said M. de Charlus, "to be informed of the coming of these terribly disreputable persons. You know that they are quite notorious. Mme. Verdurin is wrong to allow them to come here, they are all very well for the fast set. They are friends with a terrible band of women. They meet in the most appalling places." At each of these words, my suffering was increased by the addition of a fresh suffering, changing in form. "Certainly not, I don't suppose that I have any better claim than yourself

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

upon Mme. Verdurin," Brichot protested, punctuating his words, for he was afraid that he might have aroused the Baron's suspicions. And as he saw that I was determined to go, seeking to detain me with the bait of the promised entertainment: "There is one thing which the Baron seems to me not to have taken into account when he speaks of the reputation of these two ladies, namely that a person's reputation may be at the same time appalling and undeserved. Thus for instance, in the more notorious group which I shall call parallel, it is certain that the errors of justice are many and that history has registered convictions for sodomy against illustrious men who were wholly innocent of the charge. The recent discovery of Michelangelo's passionate love for a woman is a fresh fact which should entitle the friend of Leo X to the benefit of a posthumous retrial. The Michelangelo case seems to me clearly indicated to excite the snobs and mobilise the Villette, when another case in which anarchism reared its head and became the fashionable sin of our worthy dilettantes, but which must not even be mentioned now for fear of stirring up quarrels, shall have run its course." From the moment when Brichot began to speak of masculine reputations, M. de Charlus betrayed on every one of his features that special sort of impatience which one sees on the face of a medical or military expert when society people who know nothing about the subject begin to talk nonsense about points of therapeutics or strategy. "You know absolutely nothing about the matter," he said at length to Brichot. "Quote me a single reputation that is undeserved. Mention names. Oh yes, I know the whole story," was his brutal retort to a timid interruption by Brichot, "the people who

THE CAPTIVE

tried it once long ago out of curiosity, or out of affection for a dead friend, and the man who, afraid he has gone too far, if you speak to him of the beauty of a man, replies that that is Chinese to him, that he can no more distinguish between a beautiful man and an ugly one than between the engines of two motor-cars, mechanics not being in his line. That's all stuff and nonsense. Mind you, I don't mean to say that a bad (or what is conventionally so called) and yet undeserved reputation is absolutely impossible. It is so exceptional, so rare, that for practical purposes it does not exist. At the same time I, who have a certain curiosity in ferreting things out, have known cases which were not mythical. Yes, in the course of my life, I have established (scientifically speaking, of course, you mustn't take me too literally) two unjustified reputations. They generally arise from a similarity of names, or from certain outward signs, a profusion of rings, for instance, which persons who are not qualified to judge imagine to be characteristic of what you were mentioning, just as they think that a peasant never utters a sentence without adding: 'Jarnigné,' or an Englishman: 'Goddam.' Dialogue for the boulevard theatres. What will surprise you is that the unjustified are those most firmly established in the eyes of the public. You yourself, Brichot, who would thrust your hand in the flames to answer for the virtue of some man or other who comes to this house and whom the enlightened know to be a wolf in sheep's clothing, you feel obliged to believe like every Tom, Dick and Harry in what is said about some man in the public eye who is the incarnation of those propensities to the common herd, when as a matter of fact, he doesn't care twopence for

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

that sort of thing. I say twopence, because if we were to offer five-and-twenty louis, we should see the number of plaster saints dwindle down to nothing. As things are, the average rate of sanctity, if you see any sanctity in that sort of thing, is somewhere between thirty and forty per cent." If Brichot had transferred to the male sex the question of evil reputations, with me it was, inversely, to the female sex that, thinking of Albertine, I applied the Baron's words. I was appalled at his statistics, even when I bore in mind that he was probably enlarging his figures to reach the total that he would like to believe true, and had based them moreover upon the reports of persons who were scandalmongers and possibly liars, and had in any case been led astray by their own desire, which, coming in addition to that of M. de Charlus, doubtless falsified the Baron's calculations. "Thirty per cent!" exclaimed Brichot. "Why, even if the proportions were reversed I should still have to multiply the guilty a hundredfold. If it is as you say, Baron, and you are not mistaken, then we must confess that you are one of those rare visionaries who discern a truth which nobody round them has ever suspected. Just as Barrès made discoveries as to parliamentary corruption, the truth of which was afterwards established, like the existence of Leverrier's planet. Mme. Verdurin would prefer to cite men whom I would rather not name who detected in the Intelligence Bureau, in the General Staff, activities inspired, I am sure, by patriotic zeal, which I had never imagined. Upon free-masonry, German espionage, morphinomania, Léon Daudet builds up, day by day, a fantastic fairy-tale which turns out to be the barest truth. Thirty per cent!" Brichot repeated in stupefac-

THE CAPTIVE

tion. It is only fair to say that M. de Charlus taxed the great majority of his contemporaries with inversion, always excepting those men with whom he himself had had relations, their case, provided that they had introduced the least trace of romance into those relations, appearing to him more complex. So it is that we see men of the world, who refuse to believe in women's honour, allow some remnants of honour only to the woman who has been their mistress, as to whom they protest sincerely and with an air of mystery: "No, you are mistaken, she is not that sort of girl." This unlooked-for tribute is dictated partly by their own self-respect which is flattered by the supposition that such favours have been reserved for them alone, partly by their simplicity which has easily swallowed everything that their mistress has given them to believe, partly from that sense of the complexity of life which brings it about that, as soon as we approach other people, other lives, ready-made labels and classifications appear unduly crude. "Thirty per cent! But have a care; less fortunate than the historians whose conclusions the future will justify, Baron, if you were to present to posterity the statistics that you offer us, it might find them erroneous. Posterity judges only from documentary evidence, and will insist on being assured of your facts. But as no document would be forthcoming to authenticate this sort of collective phenomena which the few persons who are enlightened are only too ready to leave in obscurity, the best minds would be moved to indignation, and you would be regarded as nothing more than a slanderer or a lunatic. After having, in the social examination, obtained top marks and the primacy upon this earth, you would taste the sorrows of a blackball be-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

yond the grave. That is not worth powder and shot, to quote—may God forgive me—our friend Bossuet.” “I am not interested in history,” replied M. de Charlus, “this life is sufficient for me, it is quite interesting enough, as poor Swann used to say.” “What, you knew Swann, Baron, I was not aware of that. Tell me, was he that way inclined?” Brichot inquired with an air of misgiving! “What a mind the man has! So you suppose that I only know men like that. No, I don’t think so,” said Charlus, looking to the ground and trying to weigh the pros and cons. And deciding that, since he was dealing with Swann whose hostility to that sort of thing had always been notorious, a half-admission could only be harmless to him who was its object and flattering to him who allowed it to escape in an insinuation: “I don’t deny that long ago in our schooldays, once by accident,” said the Baron, as though unwillingly and as though he were thinking aloud, then recovering himself: “But that was centuries ago, how do you expect me to remember, you are making a fool of me,” he concluded with a laugh. “In any case, he was never what you’d call a beauty!” said Brichot who, himself hideous, thought himself good-looking and was always ready to believe that other men were ugly. “Hold your tongue,” said the Baron, “you don’t know what you’re talking about, in those days he had a peach-like complexion, and,” he added, finding a fresh note for each syllable, “he was as beautiful as Cupid himself. Besides he was always charming. The women were madly in love with him.” “But did you ever know his wife?” “Why, it was through me that he came to know her. I thought her charming in her disguise one evening when she played Miss Sacripant; I was with

THE CAPTIVE

some fellows from the club, each of us took a woman home with him, and, although all that I wanted was to go to sleep, slanderous tongues alleged, for it is terrible how malicious people are, that I went to bed with Odette. Only she took advantage of the slanders to come and worry me, and I thought I might get rid of her by introducing her to Swann. From that moment she never let me go, she couldn't spell the simplest word, it was I who wrote all her letters for her. And it was I who, afterwards, had to take her out. That, my boy, is what comes of having a good reputation, you see. Though I only half deserved it. She forced me to help her to betray him, with five, with six other men." And the lovers whom Odette had had in succession (she had been with this man, then with that, those men not one of whose names had ever been guessed by poor Swann, blinded in turn by jealousy and by love, reckoning the chances and believing in oaths more affirmative than a contradiction which escapes from the culprit, a contradiction far more unseizable, and at the same time far more significant, of which the jealous lover might take advantage more logically than of the information which he falsely pretends to have received, in the hope of confusing his mistress), these lovers M. de Charlus began to enumerate with as absolute a certainty as if he had been repeating the list of the Kings of France. And indeed the jealous lover is, like the contemporaries of an historical event, too close, he knows nothing, and it is in the eyes of strangers that the comic aspect of adultery assumes the precision of history, and prolongs itself in lists of names which are, for that matter, unimportant and become painful only to another jealous lover, such as

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

myself, who cannot help comparing his own case with that which he hears mentioned and asks himself whether the woman of whom he is suspicious cannot boast an equally illustrious list. But he can never know anything more, it is a sort of universal conspiracy, a "blindman's buff" in which everyone cruelly participates, and which consists, while his mistress flits from one to another, in holding over his eyes a bandage which he is perpetually attempting to tear off without success, for everyone keeps him blindfold, poor wretch, the kind out of kindness, the wicked out of malice, the coarse-minded out of their love of coarse jokes, the well-bred out of politeness and good-breeding, and all alike respecting one of those conventions which are called principles. "But did Swann never know that you had enjoyed her favours?" "What an idea! If you had suggested such a thing to Charles! It's enough to make one's hair stand up on end. Why, my dear fellow, he would have killed me on the spot, he was as jealous as a tiger. Any more than I ever confessed to Odette, not that she would have minded in the least, that . . . but you must not make my tongue run away with me. And the joke of it is that it was she who fired a revolver at him, and nearly hit me. Oh! I used to have a fine time with that couple; and naturally it was I who was obliged to act as his second against d'Osmond, who never forgave me. D'Osmond had carried off Odette and Swann, to console himself, had taken as his mistress, or make-believe mistress, Odette's sister. But really you must not begin to make me tell you Swann's story, we should be here for ten years, don't you know, nobody knows more about him than I do. It was I who used to take Odette out when she did not wish to see Charles. It was all the

THE CAPTIVE

more awkward for me as I have a quite near relative who bears the name Crécy, without of course having any manner of right to it, but still he was none too well pleased. For she went by the name of Odette de Crécy, as she very well might, being merely separated from a Crécy whose wife she still was, and quite an authentic person, a highly respectable gentleman out of whom she had drained his last farthing. But why should I have to tell you about this Crécy, I have seen you with him on the crawler, you used to have him to dinner at Balbec. He must have needed those dinners, poor fellow, he lived upon a tiny allowance that Swann made him; I am greatly afraid that, since my friend's death, that income must have stopped altogether. What I do not understand," M. de Charlus said to me, "is that, since you used often to go to Charles's, you did not ask me this evening to present you to the Queen of Naples. In fact I can see that you are less interested in *people* than in curiosities, and that continues to surprise me in a person who knew Swann, in whom that sort of interest was so far developed that it is impossible to say whether it was I who initiated him in these matters or he myself. It surprises me as much as if I met a person who had known Whistler and remained ignorant of what is meant by taste. By Jove, it is Morel that ought really to have been presented to her, he was passionately keen on it too, for he is the most intelligent fellow you could imagine. It is a nuisance that she has left. However, I shall effect the conjunction one of these days. It is indispensable that he should know her. The only possible obstacle would be if she were to die in the night. Well, we may hope that it will not happen." All of a sudden Brichot, who was still suffer-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

ing from the shock of the proportion "thirty per cent." which M. de Charlus had revealed to him, Brichot who had continued all this time in the pursuit of his idea, with an abruptness which suggested that of an examining magistrate seeking to make a prisoner confess, but which was in reality the result of the Professor's desire to appear perspicacious and of the misgivings that he felt about launching so grave an accusation, spoke. "Isn't Ski like that?" he inquired of M. de Charlus with a sombre air. To make us admire his alleged power of intuition, he had chosen Ski, telling himself that since there were only three innocent men in every ten, he ran little risk of being mistaken if he named Ski who seemed to him a trifle odd, suffered from insomnia, scented himself, in short was not entirely normal. "*Nothing of the sort!*" exclaimed the Baron with a bitter, dogmatic, exasperated irony. "What you say is utterly false, absurd, fantastic. Ski is like that precisely to the people who know nothing about it; if he was, he would not look so like it, be it said without any intention to criticise, for he has a certain charm, indeed I find something very attractive about him." "But give us a few names, then," Brichot pursued with insistence. M. de Charlus drew himself up with a forbidding air. "Ah! my dear Sir, I, as you know, live in a world of abstraction, all that sort of thing interests me only from a transcendental point of view," he replied with the touchy susceptibility peculiar to men of his kind, and the affectation of grandiloquence that characterised his conversation. "To me, you understand, it is only general principles that are of any interest, I speak to you of this as I might of the law of gravitation." But these moments of irritable reaction in which the Baron sought

THE CAPTIVE

to conceal his true life lasted but a short time compared with the hours of continual progression in which he allowed it to be guessed, displayed it with an irritating complacency, the need to confide being stronger in him than the fear of divulging his secret. "What I was trying to say," he went on, "is that for one evil reputation that is unjustified there are hundreds of good ones which are no less so. Obviously, the number of those who do not merit their reputations varies according to whether you rely upon what is said by men of their sort or by the others. And it is true that if the malevolence of the latter is limited by the extreme difficulty which they would find in believing that a vice as horrible to them as robbery or murder is being practised by men whom they know to be sensitive and sincere, the malevolence of the former is stimulated to excess by the desire to regard as—what shall I say?—accessible, men who appeal to them, upon the strength of information given them by people who have been led astray by a similar desire, in fact by the very aloofness with which they are generally regarded. I have heard a man, viewed with considerable disfavour on account of these tastes, say that he supposed that a certain man in society shared them. And his sole reason for believing it was that this other man had been polite to him! So many reasons for *optimism*," said the Baron artlessly, "in the computation of the number. But the true reason of the enormous difference that exists between the number calculated by the profane, and that calculated by the initiated, arises from the mystery with which the latter surround their actions, in order to conceal them from the rest, who, lacking any source of information, would be literally stupefied if they were to

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

learn merely a quarter of the truth." "Then in our days, things are as they were among the Greeks," said Brichot. "What do you mean, among the Greeks? Do you suppose that it has not been going on ever since. Take the reign of Louis XIV, you have young Verman-
dois, Molière, Prince Louis of Baden, Brunswick, Charo-
lais, Boufflers, the Great Condé, the Duc de Brissac."
"Stop a moment, I knew about Monsieur, I knew about Brissac from Saint-Simon, Vendôme of course, and many others as well. But that old pest Saint-Simon often refers to the Great Condé and Prince Louis of Baden and never mentions it." "It seems a pity, I must say, that it should fall to me to teach a Professor of the Sorbonne his history. But, my dear Master, you are as ignorant as a carp." "You are harsh, Baron, but just. And, wait a moment, now this will please you, I remember now a song of the period composed in macaronic verse about a certain storm which surprised the Great Condé as he was going down the Rhône in the company of his friend, the Marquis de La Moussaye. Condé says:

*Carus Amicus Mussaeus,
Ahl! Quod tempus, bonus Deus,
Landerirette
Imbre sumus perituri.*

And La Moussaye reassures him with:

*Securae sunt nostrae vitae
Sumus enim Sodomitae
Igne tantum perituri
Landeriri."*

"I take back what I said," said Charlus in a shrill and mannered tone, "you are a well of learning, you will

THE CAPTIVE

write it down for me, won't you, I must preserve it in my family archives, since my great-great-grand-mother was a sister of M. le Prince." "Yes, but, Baron, with regard to Prince Louis of Baden I can think of nothing. However, at that period, I suppose that generally speaking the art of war. . . ." "What nonsense, Vendôme, Villars, Prince Eugène, the Prince de Conti, and if I were to tell you of all the heroes of Tonkin, Morocco, and I am thinking of men who are truly sublime, and pious, and 'new generation,' I should astonish you greatly. Ah! I should have something to teach the people who are making inquiries about the new generation which has rejected the futile complications of its elders, M. Bourget tells us! I have a young friend out there, who is highly spoken of, who has done great things, however, I am not going to tell tales out of school, let us return to the seventeenth century, you know that Saint-Simon says of the Maréchal d'Huxelles—one among many: 'Voluptuous in Grecian debaucheries which he made no attempt to conceal, he used to get hold of young officers whom he trained to his purpose, not to mention stalwart young valets, and this openly, in the army and at Strasbourg.' You have probably read Madame's *Letters*, all his men called him 'Putain.' She is quite outspoken about it." "And she was in a good position to know, with her husband." "Such an interesting character, Madame," said M. de Charlus. "One might base upon her the lyrical synthesis of 'Wives of Aunties.' First of all, the masculine type; generally the wife of an Auntie is a man, that is what makes it so easy for her to bear him children. Then Madame does not mention Monsieur's vices, but she does mention incessantly the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

same vice in other men, writing as a well-informed woman, from that tendency which makes us enjoy finding in other people's families the same defects as afflict us in our own, in order to prove to ourselves that there is nothing exceptional or degrading in them. I was saying that things have been much the same in every age. Nevertheless, our own is quite remarkable in that respect. And notwithstanding the instances that I have borrowed from the seventeenth century, if my great ancestor François C. de La Rochefoucauld were alive in these days, he might say of them with even more justification than of his own—come, Brichot, help me out: 'Vices are common to every age; but if certain persons whom everyone knows had appeared in the first centuries of our era, would anyone speak to-day of the prostitutions of Heliogabalus?' '*Whom everyone knows*' appeals to me immensely. I see that my sagacious kinsman understood the tricks of his most illustrious contemporaries as I understand those of my own. But men of that sort are not only far more frequent to-day. They have also special characteristics." I could see that M. de Charlus was about to tell us in what fashion these habits had evolved. The insistence with which M. de Charlus kept on reverting to this topic—into which, moreover, his intellect, constantly trained in the same direction, had acquired a certain penetration—was, in a complicated way, distinctly trying. He was as boring as a specialist who can see nothing outside his own subject, as irritating as a well-informed man whose vanity is flattered by the secrets which he possesses and is burning to divulge, as repellent as those people who, whenever their own defects are mentioned, spread themselves without noticing that

THE CAPTIVE

they are giving offence, as obsessed as a maniac and as uncontrollably imprudent as a criminal. These characteristics which, at certain moments, became as obvious as those that stamp a madman or a criminal, brought me, as it happened, a certain consolation. For, making them undergo the necessary transposition in order to be able to draw from them deductions with regard to Albertine, and remembering her attitude towards Saint-Loup, and towards myself, I said to myself, painful as one of these memories and melancholy as the other was to me, I said to myself that they seemed to exclude the kind of deformity so plainly denounced, the kind of specialisation inevitably exclusive, it appeared, which was so vehemently apparent in the conversation as in the person of M. de Charlus. But he, as ill luck would have it, made haste to destroy these grounds for hope in the same way as he had furnished me with them, that is to say unconsciously. "Yes," he said, "I am no longer in my teens, and I have already seen many things change round about me, I no longer recognise either society, in which the barriers are broken down, in which a mob, devoid of elegance and decency, dance the tango even in my own family, or fashions, or politics, or the arts, or religion, or anything. But I must admit that the thing which has changed most of all is what the Germans call homosexuality. Good God, in my day, apart from the men who loathed women, and those who, caring only for women, did the other thing merely with an eye to profit, the homosexuals were sound family men and never kept mistresses except to screen themselves. If I had had a daughter to give away, it is among them that I should have looked for my son-in-law if I had wished to be certain that she would not

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

be unhappy. Alas! Things have changed entirely. Nowadays they are recruited also from the men who are the most insatiable with women. I thought I possessed a certain instinct, and that when I said to myself: 'Certainly not,' I could not have been mistaken. Well, I give it up. One of my friends, who is well-known for that sort of thing, had a coachman whom my sister-in-law Oriane found for him, a lad from Combray who was something of a jack of all trades, but particularly in trading with women, and who, I would have sworn, was as hostile as possible to anything of that sort. He broke his mistress's heart by betraying her with two women whom he adored, not to mention the others, an actress and a girl from a bar. My cousin the Prince de Guermantes, who has that irritating intelligence of people who are too ready to believe anything, said to me one day: 'But why in the world does not X—— have his coachman? It might be a pleasure to Théodore' (which is the coachman's name) 'and he may be annoyed at finding that his master does not make advances to him.' I could not help telling Gilbert to hold his tongue; I was overwrought both by that boasted perspicacity which, when it is exercised indiscriminately, is a want of perspicacity, and also by the silver-lined malice of my cousin who would have liked X—— to risk taking the first steps so that, if the going was good, he might follow." "Then the Prince de Guermantes is like that, too?" asked Brichot with a blend of astonishment and dismay. "Good God," replied M. de Charlus, highly delighted, "it is so notorious that I don't think I am guilty of an indiscretion if I tell you that he is. Very well, the year after this, I went to Balbec, where I heard from a sailor who used to

THE CAPTIVE

take me out fishing occasionally, that my Théodore, whose sister, I may mention, is the maid of a friend of Mme. Verdurin, Baroness Putbus, used to come down to the harbour to pick up now one sailor, now another, with the most infernal cheek, to go for a trip on the sea 'with extras.'” It was now my turn to inquire whether his employer, whom I had identified as the gentleman who at Balbec used to play cards all day long with his mistress, and who was the leader of the little group of four boon companions, was like the Prince de Guermantes. “Why, of course, everyone knows about him, he makes no attempt to conceal it.” “But he had his mistress there with him.” “Well, and what difference does that make? How innocent these children are,” he said to me in a fatherly tone, little suspecting the grief that I extracted from his words when I thought of Albertine. “She is charming, his mistress.” “But then his three friends are like himself.” “Not at all,” he cried, stopping his ears as though, in playing some instrument, I had struck a wrong note. “Now he has gone to the other extreme. So a man has no longer the right to have friends? Ah! Youth, youth; it gets everything wrong. We shall have to begin your education over again, my boy. Well,” he went on, “I admit that this case, and I know of many others, however open a mind I may try to keep for every form of audacity, does embarrass me. I may be very old-fashioned, but I fail to understand,” he said in the tone of an old Gallican speaking of some development of Ultramontaniam, of a Liberal Royalist speaking of the *Action Française* or of a disciple of Claude Monet speaking of the Cubists. “I do not reproach these innovators, I envy them if anything, I try to understand them, but I

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

do not succeed. If they are so passionately fond of woman, why, and especially in this workaday world where that sort of thing is so frowned upon, where they conceal themselves from a sense of shame, have they any need of what they call 'a bit of brown'? It is because it represents to them something else. What?" "What else can a woman represent to Albertine," I thought, and there indeed lay the cause of my anguish. "Decidedly, Baron," said Brichot, "should the Board of Studies ever think of founding a Chair of Homosexuality, I shall see that your name is the first to be submitted. Or rather, no; an Institute of Psycho-phÿsiology would suit you better. And I can see you, best of all, provided with a Chair in the Collège de France, which would enable you to devote yourself to personal researches the results of which you would deliver, like the Professor of Tamil or Sanskrit, to the handful of people who are interested in them. You would have an audience of two, with your assistant, not that I mean to cast the slightest suspicion upon our corps of janitors, whom I believe to be above suspicion." "You know nothing about them," the Baron retorted in a harsh and cutting tone. "Besides you are wrong in thinking that so few people are interested in the subject. It is just the opposite." And without stopping to consider the incompatibility between the invariable trend of his own conversation and the reproach which he was about to heap upon other people: "It is, on the contrary, most alarming," said the Baron, with a scandalised and contrite air, "people are talking about nothing else. It is a scandal, but I am not exaggerating, my dear fellow! It appears that, the day before yesterday, at the Duchesse d'Agen's, they talked about nothing else for

THE CAPTIVE

two hours on end; you can imagine, if women have taken to discussing that sort of thing, it is a positive scandal! What is vilest of all is that they get their information," he went on with an extraordinary fire and emphasis, "from pests, regular harlots like young Châtellerault, who has the worst reputation in the world, who tell them stories about other men. I have been told that he said more than enough to hang me, but I don't care, I am convinced that the mud and filth flung by an individual who barely escaped being turned out of the Jockey for cheating at cards can only fall back upon himself. I am sure that if I were Jane d'Agen, I should have sufficient respect for my drawing-room not to allow such subjects to be discussed in it, nor to allow my own flesh and blood to be dragged through the mire in my house. But there is no longer any society, any rules, any conventions, in conversation any more than in dress. Ah, my dear fellow, it is the end of the world. Everyone has become so malicious. The prize goes to the man who can speak most evil of his fellows. It is appalling."

As cowardly still as I had been long ago in my boyhood at Combray when I used to run away in order not to see my grandfather tempted with brandy and the vain efforts of my grandmother imploring him not to drink it, I had but one thought in my mind, which was to leave the Verdurins' house before the execution of M. de Charlus occurred. "I simply must go," I said to Brichot. "I am coming with you," he replied, "but we cannot slip away, English fashion. Come and say good-bye to Mme. Verdurin," the Professor concluded, as he made his way to the drawing-room with the air of a man who,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

in a guessing game, goes to find out whether he may "come back".

While we conversed, M. Verdurin, at a signal from his wife, had taken Morel aside. Indeed, had Mme. Verdurin decided, after considering the matter in all its aspects, that it was wiser to postpone Morel's enlightenment, she was powerless now to prevent it. There are certain desires, some of them confined to the mouth, which, as soon as we have allowed them to grow, insist upon being gratified, whatever the consequences may be; we are unable to resist the temptation to kiss a bare shoulder at which we have been gazing for too long and at which our lips strike like a serpent at a bird, to bury our sweet tooth in a cake that has fascinated and famished it, nor can we forego the delight of the amazement, anxiety, grief or mirth to which we can move another person by some unexpected communication. So, in a frenzy of melodrama, Mme. Verdurin had ordered her husband to take Morel out of the room and, at all costs, to explain matters to him. The violinist had begun by deploring the departure of the Queen of Naples before he had had a chance of being presented to her. M. de Charlus had told him so often that she was the sister of the Empress Elizabeth and of the Duchesse d'Alençon that Her Majesty had assumed an extraordinary importance in his eyes. But the Master explained to him that it was not to talk about the Queen of Naples that they had withdrawn from the rest, and then went straight to the root of the matter. "Listen," he had concluded after a long explanation: "listen; if you like, we can go and ask my wife what she thinks. I give you my word of honour, I've said nothing to her about it. We shall see

THE CAPTIVE

how she looks at it. My advice is perhaps not the best, but you know how sound her judgment is; besides, she is extremely attached to yourself, let us go and submit the case to her." And while Mme. Verdurin, awaiting with impatience the emotions that she would presently be relishing as she talked to the musician, and again, after he had gone, when she made her husband give her a full report of their conversation, continued to repeat: "But what in the world can they be doing? I do hope that my husband, in keeping him all this time, has managed to give him his cue," M. Verdurin reappeared with Morel who seemed greatly moved. "He would like to ask your advice," M. Verdurin said to his wife, in the tone of a man who does not know whether his prayer will be heard. Instead of replying to M. Verdurin, it was to Morel that, in the heat of her passion, Mme. Verdurin addressed herself. "I agree entirely with my husband, I consider that you cannot tolerate this sort of thing for another instant," she exclaimed with violence, discarding as a useless fiction her agreement with her husband that she was supposed to know nothing of what he had been saying to the violinist. "How do you mean? Tolerate what?" stammered M. Verdurin, endeavouring to feign astonishment and seeking, with an awkwardness that was explained by his dismay, to defend his falsehood. "I guessed what you were saying to him," replied Mme. Verdurin, undisturbed by the improbability of this explanation, and caring little what, when he recalled this scene, the violinist might think of the Mistress's veracity. "No," Mme. Verdurin continued, "I feel that you ought not to endure any longer this degrading promiscuity with a tainted person whom nobody will have in her house,"

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

she went on, regardless of the fact that this was untrue and forgetting that she herself entertained him almost daily. "You are the talk of the Conservatoire," she added, feeling that this was the argument that carried most weight; "another month of this life and your artistic future is shattered, whereas, without Charlus, you ought to be making at least a hundred thousand francs a year." "But I have never heard anyone utter a word, I am astounded, I am very grateful to you," Morel murmured, the tears starting to his eyes. But, being obliged at once to feign astonishment and to conceal his shame, he had turned redder and was perspiring more abundantly than if he had played all Beethoven's sonatas in succession, and tears welled from his eyes which the Bonn Master would certainly not have drawn from him. "If you have never heard anything, you are unique in that respect. He is a gentleman with a vile reputation and the most shocking stories are told about him. I know that the police are watching him and that is perhaps the best thing for him if he is not to end like all those men, murdered by hoodligans," she went on, for as she thought of Charlus the memory of Mme. de Duras recurred to her, and in her frenzy of rage she sought to aggravate still further the wounds that she was inflicting on the unfortunate Charlie, and to avenge herself for those that she had received in the course of the evening. "Anyhow, even financially, he can be of no use to you, he is completely ruined since he has become the prey of people who are blackmailing him, and who can't even make him fork out the price of the tune they call, still less can he pay you for your playing, for it is all heavily mortgaged, town house, country house, everything." Morel was all

the more ready to believe this lie since M. de Charlus liked to confide in him his relations with hooligans, a race for which the son of a valet, however debauched he may be, professes a feeling of horror as strong as his attachment to Bonapartist principles.

Already, in the cunning mind of Morel, a plan was beginning to take shape similar to what was called in the eighteenth century the reversal of alliances. Determined never to speak to M. de Charlus again, he would return on the following evening to Jupien's niece, and see that everything was made straight with her. Unfortunately for him this plan was doomed to failure, M. de Charlus having made an appointment for that very evening with Jupien, which the ex-tailor dared not fail to keep, in spite of recent events. Other events, as we shall see, having followed upon Morel's action, when Jupien in tears told his tale of woe to the Baron, the latter, no less wretched, assured him that he would adopt the forsaken girl, that she should assume one of the titles that were at his disposal, probably that of Mlle. d'Oléron, that he would see that she received a thorough education, and furnish her with a rich husband. Promises which filled Jupien with joy and left his niece unmoved, for she was still in love with Morel, who, from stupidity or cynicism, used to come into the shop and tease her in Jupien's absence. "What is the matter with you," he would say with a laugh, "with those black marks under your eyes? A broken heart? Gad, the years pass and people change. After all, a man is free to try on a shoe, all the more a woman, and if she doesn't fit him. . . ." He lost his temper once only, because she cried, which he considered cowardly, unworthy

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

of her. People are not always very tolerant of the tears which they themselves have provoked.

But we have looked too far ahead, for all this did not happen until after the Verdurins' party which we have interrupted, and we must go back to the point at which we left off. "I should never have suspected it," Morel groaned, in answer to Mme. Verdurin. "Naturally people do not say it to your face, that does not prevent your being the talk of the Conservatoire," Mme. Verdurin went on wickedly, seeking to make it plain to Morel that it was not only M. de Charlus that was being criticised, but himself also. "I can well believe that you know nothing about it; all the same, people are quite outspoken. Ask Ski what they were saying the other day at Chevillard's within a foot of us when you came into my box. I mean to say, people point you out. As far as I'm concerned, I don't pay the slightest attention, but what I do feel is that it makes a man supremely ridiculous and that he becomes a public laughing-stock for the rest of his life." "I don't know how to thank you," said Charlie in the tone we use to a dentist who has just caused us terrible pain while we tried not to let him see it, or to a too blood-thirsty second who has forced us into a duel on account of some casual remark of which he has said: "You can't swallow that." "I believe that you have plenty of character, that you are a man," replied Mme. Verdurin, "and that you will be capable of speaking out boldly, although he tells everybody that you would never dare, that he holds you fast." Charlie, seeking a borrowed dignity in which to cloak the tatters of his own, found in his memory something that he had read or, more probably, heard quoted, and at once proclaimed: "I was not brought up

THE CAPTIVE

to eat that sort of bread. This very evening I will break with M. de Charlus. The Queen of Naples has gone, hasn't she? Otherwise, before breaking with him, I should like to ask him. . . ." "It is not necessary to break with him altogether," said Mme. Verdurin, anxious to avoid a disruption of the little nucleus. "There is no harm in your seeing him here, among our little group, where you are appreciated, where no one speaks any evil of you. But insist upon your freedom, and do not let him drag you about among all those sheep who are friendly to your face; I wish you could have heard what they were saying behind your back. Anyhow, you need feel no regret, not only are you wiping off a stain which would have marked you for the rest of your life, from the artistic point of view, even if there had not been this scandalous presentation by Charlus, I don't mind telling you that wasting yourself like this in this sham society will make people suppose that you aren't serious, give you an amateur reputation, as a little drawing-room performer, which is a terrible thing at your age. I can understand that to all those fine ladies it is highly convenient to be able to return their friends' hospitality by making you come and play for nothing, but it is your future as an artist that would foot the bill. I don't say that you shouldn't go to one or two of them. You were speaking of the Queen of Naples—who has left, for she had to go on to another party—now she is a splendid woman, and I don't mind saying that I think she has a poor opinion of Charlus and came here chiefly to please me. Yes, yes, I know she was longing to meet us, M. Verdurin and myself. That is a house in which you might play. And then I may tell you that if I take you—be-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

cause the artists all know me, you understand, they have always been most obliging to me, and regard me almost as one of themselves, as their Mistress—that is a very different matter. But whatever you do, you must never go near Mme. de Duras! Don't go and make a stupid blunder like that! I know several artists who have come here and told me all about her. They know they can trust me," she said, in the sweet and simple tone which she knew how to adopt in an instant, imparting an appropriate air of modesty to her features, an appropriate charm to her eyes, "they come here, just like that, to tell me all their little troubles; the ones who are said to be most silent, go on chatting to me sometimes for hours on end and I can't tell you how interesting they are. Poor Chabrier used always to say: 'There's nobody like Mme. Verdurin for getting them to talk.' Very well, don't you know, all of them, without one exception, I have seen them in tears because they had gone to play for Mme. de Duras. It is not only the way she enjoys making her servants humiliate them, they could never get an engagement anywhere else again. The agents would say: 'Oh yes, the fellow who plays at Mme. de Duras's.' That settled it. There is nothing like that for ruining a man's future. You know what society people are like, it's not taken seriously, you may have all the talent in the world, it's a dreadful thing to have to say, but one Mme. de Duras is enough to give you the reputation of an amateur. And among artists, don't you know, well I, you can ask yourself whether I know them, when I have been moving among them for forty years, launching them, taking an interest in them; very well, when they say that somebody is an amateur, that finishes it. And people

THE CAPTIVE

were beginning to say it of you. Indeed, at times I have been obliged to take up the cudgels, to assure them that you would not play in some absurd drawing-room! Do you know what the answer was: 'But he will be forced to go, Charlus won't even consult him, he never asks him for his opinion.' Somebody thought he would pay him a compliment and said: 'We greatly admire your friend Morel.' Can you guess what answer he made, with that insolent air which you know? 'But what do you mean by calling him my friend, we are not of the same class, say rather that he is my creature, my protégé.'" At this moment there stirred beneath the convex brows of the musical deity the one thing that certain people cannot keep to themselves, a saying which it is not merely abject but imprudent to repeat. But the need to repeat it is stronger than honour, than prudence. It was to this need that, after a few convulsive movements of her spherical and sorrowful brows, the Mistress succumbed: "Some one actually told my husband that he had said 'my servant,' but for that I cannot vouch," she added. It was a similar need that had compelled M. de Charlus, shortly after he had sworn to Morel that nobody should ever know the story of his birth, to say to Mme. Verdurin: "His father was a flunkey." A similar need again, now that the story had been started, would make it circulate from one person to another, each of whom would confide it under the seal of a secrecy which would be promised and not kept by the hearer, as by the informant himself. These stories would end, as in the game called hunt-the-thimble, by being traced back to Mme. Verdurin, bringing down upon her the wrath of the person concerned, who would at last have learned the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

truth. She knew this, but could not repress the words that were burning her tongue. Anyhow, the word "servant" was bound to annoy Morel. She said "servant" nevertheless, and if she added that she could not vouch for the word, this was so as at once to appear certain of the rest, thanks to this hint of uncertainty, and to shew her impartiality. This impartiality that she shewed, she herself found so touching that she began to speak affectionately to Charlie: "For, don't you see," she went on, "I am not blaming him, he is dragging you down into his abyss, it is true, but it is not his fault, since he wallows in it himself, since he wallows in it," she repeated in a louder tone, having been struck by the aptness of the image which had taken shape so quickly that her attention only now overtook it and was trying to give it prominence. "No, the fault that I do find with him," she said in a melting tone—like a woman drunken with her own success—"is a want of delicacy towards yourself. There are certain things which one does not say in public. Well, this evening, he was betting that he would make you blush with joy, by telling you (stuff and nonsense, of course, for his recommendation would be enough to prevent your getting it) that you were to have the Cross of the Legion of Honour. Even that I could overlook, although I have never quite liked," she went on with a delicate, dignified air, "hearing a person make a fool of his friends, but, don't you know, there are certain little things that one does resent. Such as when he told us, with screams of laughter, that if you want the Cross it's to please your uncle and that your uncle was a footman." "He told you that!" cried Charlie, believing, on the strength of this adroitly interpolated quotation, in the

THE CAPTIVE

truth of everything that Mme. Verdurin had said! Mme. Verdurin was overwhelmed with the joy of an old mistress who, just as her young lover was on the point of deserting her, has succeeded in breaking off his marriage, and it is possible that she had not calculated her lie, that she was not even consciously lying. A sort of sentimental logic, something perhaps more elementary still, a sort of nervous reflex urging her, in order to brighten her life and preserve her happiness, to stir up trouble in the little clan, may have brought impulsively to her lips, without giving her time to check their veracity, these assertions diabolically effective if not rigorously exact. "If he had only repeated it to us, it wouldn't matter," the Mistress went on, "we know better than to listen to what he says, besides, what does a man's origin matter, you have your own value, you are what you make yourself, but that he should use it to make Mme. de Portefin laugh" (Mme. Verdurin named this lady on purpose because she knew that Charlie admired her) "that is what vexes us: my husband said to me when he heard him: 'I would sooner he had struck me in the face.' For he is as fond of you as I am, don't you know, is Gustave" (from this we learn that M. Verdurin's name was Gustave). "He is really very sensitive." "But I never told you I was fond of him," muttered M. Verdurin, acting the kind-hearted curmudgeon. "It is Charlus that is fond of him." "Oh, no! Now I realise the difference, I was betrayed by a scoundrel and you, you are good," Charlie exclaimed in all sincerity. "No, no," murmured Mme. Verdurin, seeking to retain her victory, for she felt that her Wednesdays were safe, but not to abuse it: "scoundrel is too strong; he does harm, a great deal of

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

harm, unconsciously; you know that tale about the Legion of Honour was the affair of a moment. And it would be painful to me to repeat all that he said about your family," said Mme. Verdurin, who would have been greatly embarrassed had she been asked to do so. "Oh, even if it only took a moment, it proves that he is a traitor," cried Morel. It was at this moment that we returned to the drawing-room. "Ah!" exclaimed M. de Charlus when he saw that Morel was in the room, advancing upon him with the alacrity of the man who has skilfully organised a whole evening's entertainment with a view to an assignation with a woman, and in his excitement never imagines that he has with his own hands set the snare in which he will presently be caught and publicly thrashed by bravoës stationed in readiness by her husband. "Well, after all it is none too soon; are you satisfied, young glory, and presently young knight of the Legion of Honour? For very soon you will be able to sport your Cross," M. de Charlus said to Morel with a tender and triumphant air, but by the very mention of the decoration endorsed Mme. Verdurin's lies, which appeared to Morel to be indisputable truth. "Leave me alone, I forbid you to come near me," Morel shouted at the Baron. "You know what I mean, all right, I'm not the first young man you've tried to corrupt!" My sole consolation lay in the thought that I was about to see Morel and the Verdurins pulverised by M. de Charlus. For a thousand times less an offence I had been visited with his furious rage, no one was safe from it, a king would not have intimidated him. Instead of which, an extraordinary thing happened. One saw M. de Charlus dumb, stupefied, measuring the depths of his misery without

THE CAPTIVE

understanding its cause, finding not a word to utter, raising his eyes to stare at each of the company in turn, with a questioning, outraged, suppliant air, which seemed to be asking them not so much what had happened as what answer he ought to make. And yet M. de Charlus possessed all the resources, not merely of eloquence but of audacity, when, seized by a rage which had long been simmering against some one, he reduced him to desperation, with the most outrageous speeches, in front of a scandalised society which had never imagined that anyone could go so far. M. de Charlus, on these occasions, burned, convulsed with a sort of epilepsy, which left everyone trembling. But in these instances he had the initiative, he launched the attack, he said whatever came into his mind (just as Bloch was able to make fun of Jews and blushed if the word Jew was uttered in his hearing). Perhaps what struck him speechless was—when he saw that M. and Mme. Verdurin turned their eyes from him and that no one was coming to his rescue—his anguish at the moment and, still more, his dread of greater anguish to come; or else that, not having lost his temper in advance, in imagination, and forged his thunderbolt, not having his rage ready as a weapon in his hand, he had been seized and dealt a mortal blow at the moment when he was unarmed (for, sensitive, neurotic, hysterical, his impulses were genuine, but his courage was a sham; indeed, as I had always thought, and this was what made me like him, his malice was a sham also: the people whom he hated, he hated because he thought that they looked down upon him; had they been civil to him, instead of flying into a furious rage with them, he would have taken them to his bosom, and he did not

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

shew the normal reactions of a man of honour who has been insulted); or else that, in a sphere which was not his own, he felt himself less at his ease and less courageous than he would have been in the Faubourg. The fact remains that, in this drawing-room which he despised, this great nobleman (in whom his sense of superiority to the middle classes was no less essentially inherent than it had been in any of his ancestors who had stood in the dock before the Revolutionary Tribunal) could do nothing, in a paralysis of all his members, including his tongue, but cast in every direction glances of terror, outraged by the violence that had been done to him, no less suppliant than questioning. In a situation so cruelly unforeseen, this great talker could do no more than stammer: "What does it all mean, what has happened?" His question was not even heard. And the eternal pantomime of panic terror has so little altered, that this elderly gentleman, to whom a disagreeable incident had just occurred in a Parisian drawing-room, unconsciously repeated the various formal attitudes in which the Greek sculptors of the earliest times symbolised the terror of nymphs pursued by the Great Pan.

The ambassador who has been recalled, the under-secretary placed suddenly on the retired list, the man about town whom people begin to cut, the lover who has been shewn the door examine sometimes for months on end the event that has shattered their hopes; they turn it over and over like a projectile fired at them they know not whence or by whom, almost as though it were a meteorite. They would fain know the elements that compose this strange engine which has burst upon them, learn what hostilities may be detected in them. Chemists

have at least the power of analysis; sick men suffering from a malady the origin of which they do not know can send for the doctor; criminal mysteries are more or less solved by the examining magistrate. But when it comes to the disconcerting actions of our fellow-men, we rarely discover their motives. Thus M. de Charlus, to anticipate the days that followed this party to which we shall presently return, could see in Charlie's attitude one thing alone that was self-evident. Charlie, who had often threatened the Baron that he would tell people of the passion that he inspired in him, must have seized the opportunity to do so when he considered that he had now sufficiently "arrived" to be able to fly unaided. And he must, out of sheer ingratitude, have told Mme. Verdurin everything. But how had she allowed herself to be taken in (for the Baron, having made up his mind to deny the story, had already persuaded himself that the sentiments for which he was blamed were imaginary)? Some friends of Mme. Verdurin, who themselves perhaps felt a passion for Charlie, must have prepared the ground. Accordingly, M. de Charlus during the next few days wrote terrible letters to a number of the faithful, who were entirely innocent and concluded that he must be mad; then he went to Mme. Verdurin with a long and moving tale, which had not at all the effect that he desired. For in the first place Mme. Verdurin repeated to the Baron: "All you need do is not to bother about him, treat him with scorn, he is a mere boy." Now the Baron longed only for a reconciliation. In the second place, to bring this about, by depriving Charlie of everything of which he had felt himself assured, he asked Mme. Verdurin not to invite him again; a request which she met with a re-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

fusal that brought upon her angry and sarcastic letters from M. de Charlus. Flitting from one supposition to another, the Baron never arrived at the truth, which was that the blow had not come from Morel. It is true that he might have learned this by asking him for a few minutes' conversation. But he felt that this would injure his dignity and would be against the interests of his love. He had been insulted, he awaited an explanation. There is, for that matter, almost invariably, attached to the idea of a conversation which might clear up a misunderstanding, another idea which, whatever the reason, prevents us from agreeing to that conversation. The man who is abased and has shewn his weakness on a score of occasions, will furnish proofs of pride on the twenty-first, the only occasion on which it would serve him not to adopt a headstrong and arrogant attitude but to dispel an error which will take root in his adversary failing a contradiction. As for the social side of the incident, the rumour spread abroad that M. de Charlus had been turned out of the Verdurins' house at the moment when he was attempting to rape a young musician. The effect of this rumour was that nobody was surprised when M. de Charlus did not appear again at the Verdurins', and whenever he happened by chance to meet, anywhere else, one of the faithful whom he had suspected and insulted, as this person had a grudge against the Baron who himself abstained from greeting him, people were not surprised, realising that no member of the little clan would ever wish to speak to the Baron again.

While M. de Charlus, rendered speechless by Morel's words and by the attitude of the Mistress, stood there in the pose of the nymph a prey to Panic terror, M. and

THE CAPTIVE

Mme. Verdurin had retired to the outer drawing-room, as a sign of diplomatic rupture, leaving M. de Charlus by himself, while on the platform Morel was putting his violin in its case: "Now you must tell us exactly what happened," Mme. Verdurin appealed avidly to her husband. "I don't know what you can have said to him, he looked quite upset," said Ski, "there are tears in his eyes." Pretending not to have understood: "I'm sure, nothing that I said could make any difference to him," said Mme. Verdurin, employing one of those stratagems which do not deceive everybody, so as to force the sculptor to repeat that Charlie was in tears, tears which filled the Mistress with too much pride for her to be willing to run the risk that one or other of the faithful, who might not have heard what was said, remained in ignorance of them. "No, it has made a difference, for I saw big tears glistening in his eyes," said the sculptor in a low tone with a smile of malicious connivance, and a sidelong glance to make sure that Morel was still on the platform and could not overhear the conversation. But there was somebody who did overhear, and whose presence, as soon as it was observed, was to restore to Morel one of the hopes that he had forfeited. This was the Queen of Naples, who, having left her fan behind, had thought it more polite, on coming away from another party to which she had gone on, to call for it in person. She had entered the room quite quietly, as though she were ashamed of herself, prepared to make apologies for her presence, and to pay a little call upon her hostess now that all the other guests had gone. But no one had heard her come in, in the heat of the incident the meaning of which she had at once gathered, and which set her

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

ablaze with indignation. "Ski says that he had tears in his eyes, did you notice that? I did not see any tears. Ah, yes, I remember now," she corrected herself, in the fear that her denial might not be believed. "As for Charlus, he's not far off them, he ought to take a chair, he's tottering on his feet, he'll be on the floor in another minute," she said with a pitiless laugh. At that moment Morel hastened towards her: "Isn't that lady the Queen of Naples?" he asked (albeit he knew quite well that she was), pointing to Her Majesty who was making her way towards Charlus. "After what has just happened, I can no longer, I'm afraid, ask the Baron to present me." "Wait, I shall take you to her myself," said Mme. Verdurin, and, followed by a few of the faithful, but not by myself and Brichot who made haste to go and call for our hats and coats, she advanced upon the Queen who was talking to M. de Charlus. He had imagined that the realisation of his great desire that Morel should be presented to the Queen of Naples could be prevented only by the improbable demise of that lady. But we picture the future as a reflexion of the present projected into empty space, whereas it is the result, often almost immediate, of causes which for the most part escape our notice. Not an hour had passed, and now M. de Charlus would have given everything he possessed in order that Morel should not be presented to the Queen. Mme. Verdurin made the Queen a curtsy. Seeing that the other appeared not to recognise her: "I am Mme. Verdurin. Your Majesty does not remember me." "Quite well," said the Queen as she continued so naturally to converse with M. de Charlus and with an air of such complete indifference that Mme. Verdurin doubted whether it was to herself that

THE CAPTIVE

this "Quite well" had been addressed, uttered with a marvellously detached intonation, which wrung from M. de Charlus, despite his broken heart, a smile of expert and delighted appreciation of the art of impertinence. Morel, who had watched from the distance the preparations for his presentation, now approached. The Queen offered her arm to M. de Charlus. With him, too, she was vexed, but only because he did not make a more energetic stand against vile detractors. She was crimson with shame for him whom the Verdurins dared to treat in this fashion. The entirely simple civility which she had shewn them a few hours earlier, and the arrogant pride with which she now stood up to face them, had their source in the same region of her heart. The Queen, as a woman full of good nature, regarded good nature first and foremost in the form of an unshakable attachment to the people whom she liked, to her own family, to all the Princes of her race, among whom was M. de Charlus, and, after them, to all the people of the middle classes or of the humblest populace who knew how to respect those whom she liked and felt well-disposed towards them. It was as to a woman endowed with these sound instincts that she had shewn kindness to Mme. Verdurin. And, no doubt, this is a narrow conception, somewhat Tory, and increasingly obsolete, of good nature. But this does not mean that her good nature was any less genuine or ardent. The ancients were no less strongly attached to the group of humanity to which they devoted themselves because it did not exceed the limits of their city, nor are the men of to-day to their country than will be those who in the future love the United States of the World. In my own immediate surroundings, I have

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

had an example of this in my mother whom Mme. de Cambremer and Mme. de Guermantes could never persuade to take part in any philanthropic undertaking, to join any patriotic workroom, to sell or to be a patroness at any bazaar. I do not go so far as to say that she was right in doing good only when her heart had first spoken, and in reserving for her own family, for her servants, for the unfortunate whom chance brought in her way, her treasures of love and generosity, but I do know that these, like those of my grandmother, were unbounded and exceeded by far anything that Mme. de Guermantes or Mme. de Cambremer ever could have done or did. The case of the Queen of Naples was altogether different, but even here it must be admitted that her conception of deserving people was not at all that set forth in those novels of Dostoievski which Albertine had taken from my shelves and devoured, that is to say in the guise of wheedling parasites, thieves, drunkards, at one moment stupid, at another insolent, debauchees, at a pinch murderers. Extremes, however, meet, since the noble man, the brother, the outraged kinsman whom the Queen sought to defend, was M. de Charlus, that is to say, notwithstanding his birth and all the family ties that bound him to the Queen, a man whose virtue was hedged round by many vices. "You do not look at all well, my dear cousin," she said to M. de Charlus. "Lean upon my arm. Be sure that it will still support you. It is firm enough for that." Then, raising her eyes proudly to face her adversaries (at that moment, Ski told me, there were in front of her Mme. Verdurin and Morel), "You know that, in the past, at Gaeta, it held the mob in defiance. It will be able to serve you as a rampart." And

THE CAPTIVE

it was thus, taking the Baron on her arm and without having allowed Morel to be presented to her, that the splendid sister of the Empress Elizabeth left the house. It might be supposed, in view of M. de Charlus's terrible nature, the persecutions with which he terrorised even his own family, that he would, after the events of this evening, let loose his fury and practise reprisals upon the Verdurins. We have seen why nothing of this sort occurred at first. Then the Baron, having caught cold shortly afterwards, and contracted the septic pneumonia which was very rife that winter, was for long regarded by his doctors, and regarded himself, as being at the point of death, and lay for many months suspended between it and life. Was there simply a physical change, and the substitution of a different malady for the neurosis that had previously made him lose all control of himself in his outbursts of rage? For it is too obvious to suppose that, having never taken the Verdurins seriously, from the social point of view, but having come at last to understand the part that they had played, he was unable to feel the resentment that he would have felt for any of his equals; too obvious also to remember that neurotics, irritated on the slightest provocation by imaginary and inoffensive enemies, become on the contrary inoffensive as soon as anyone takes the offensive against them, and that we can calm them more easily by flinging cold water in their faces than by attempting to prove to them the inanity of their grievances. It is probably not in a physical change that we ought to seek the explanation of this absence of rancour, but far more in the malady itself. It exhausted the Baron so completely that he had little leisure left in which to think about the Verdurins. He

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

was almost dead. We mentioned offensives; even those which have only a posthumous effect require, if we are to "stage" them properly, the sacrifice of a part of our strength. M. de Charlus had too little strength left for the activity of a preparation. We hear often of mortal enemies who open their eyes to gaze upon one another in the hour of death and close them again, made happy. This must be a rare occurrence, except when death surprises us in the midst of life. It is, on the contrary, at the moment when we have nothing left to lose, that we are not bothered by the risks which, when full of life, we would lightly have undertaken. The spirit of vengeance forms part of life, it abandons us as a rule—notwithstanding certain exceptions which, occurring in the heart of the same person, are, as we shall see, human contradictions,—on the threshold of death. After having thought for a moment about the Verdurins, M. de Charlus felt that he was too weak, turned his face to the wall, and ceased to think about anything. If he often lay silent like this, it was not that he had lost his eloquence. It still flowed from its source, but it had changed. Detached from the violence which it had so often adorned, it was no more now than an almost mystic eloquence decorated with words of meekness, words from the Gospel, an apparent resignation to death. He talked especially on the days when he thought that he would live. A relapse made him silent. This Christian meekness into which his splendid violence was transposed (as is in *Esther* the so different genius of *Andromaque*) provoked the admiration of those who came to his bedside. It would have provoked that of the Verdurins themselves, who could not have helped adoring a man whom his weakness had made them

THE CAPTIVE

hate. 'It is true that thoughts which were Christian only in appearance rose to the surface. He implored the Archangel Gabriel to appear and announce to him, as to the Prophet, at what time the Messiah would come to him. And, breaking off with a sweet and sorrowful smile, he would add: "But the Archangel must not ask me, as he asked Daniel, to have patience for 'seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks,' for I should be dead before then." The person whom he awaited thus was Morel. And so he asked the Archangel Raphael to bring him to him, as he had brought the young Tobias. And, introducing more human methods (like sick Popes who, while ordering masses to be said, do not neglect to send for their doctors), he insinuated to his visitors that if Brichot were to bring him without delay his young Tobias, perhaps the Archangel Raphael would consent to restore Brichot's sight, as he had done to the father of Tobias, or as had happened in the sheep-pool of Bethesda. But, notwithstanding these human lapses, the moral purity of M. de Charlus's conversation had none the less become charming. Vanity, slander, the insanity of malice and pride, had alike disappeared. Morally M. de Charlus had been raised far above the level at which he had lived in the past. But this moral perfection, as to the reality of which his oratorical art was for that matter capable of deceiving more than one of his compassionate audience, this perfection vanished with the malady which had laboured on its behalf. M. de Charlus returned along the downward slope with a rapidity which, as we shall see, continued steadily to increase. But the Verdurins' attitude towards him was by that time no

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

more than a somewhat distant memory which more immediate outbursts prevented from reviving.

To turn back to the Verdurins' party, when the host and hostess were by themselves, M. Verdurin said to his wife: "You know where Cottard has gone? He is with Saniette; he has been speculating to put himself straight and has gone smash. When he got home just now after leaving us, and learned that he hadn't a penny in the world and nearly a million francs of debts, Saniette had a stroke." "But then, why did he gamble, it's idiotic, he was the last person in the world to succeed at that game. Cleverer men than he get plucked at it, and he was born to let himself be swindled by every Tom, Dick and Harry." "Why, of course, we have always known that he was an idiot," said M. Verdurin. "Anyhow, this is the result. Here you have a man who will be turned out of house and home to-morrow by his landlord, who is going to find himself utterly penniless; his family don't like him, Forcheville is the last man in the world to do anything for him. And so it occurred to me, I don't wish to do anything that doesn't meet with your approval, but we might perhaps be able to scrape up a small income for him so that he shan't be too conscious of his ruin, so that he can keep a roof over his head." "I entirely agree with you, it is very good of you to have thought of it. But you say 'a roof'; the imbecile has kept on an apartment beyond his means, he can't remain in it, we shall have to find him a couple of rooms somewhere. I understand that at the present moment he is still paying six or seven thousand francs for his apartment." "Six thousand, five hundred. But he is greatly attached to his home. In short, he has had his first stroke, he can

THE CAPTIVE

scarcely live more than two or three years. Suppose we were to allow him ten thousand francs for three years. It seems to me that we should be able to afford that. We might for instance this year, instead of taking la Raspelière again, get hold of something on a simpler scale. With our income, it seems to me that to sacrifice ten thousand francs a year for three years is not out of the question." "Very well, there's only the nuisance that people will get to know about it, we shall be expected to do it again for others." "Believe me, I have thought about that. I shall do it only upon the express condition that nobody knows anything about it. Thank you, I have no desire that we should become the benefactors of the human race. No philanthropy! What we might do is to tell him that the money has been left to him by Princess Sherbatoff." "But will he believe it? She consulted Cottard about her will." "If the worse comes to the worst, we might take Cottard into our confidence, he is used to professional secrecy, he makes an enormous amount of money, he won't be like one of those busy-bodies one is obliged to hush up. He may even be willing to say, perhaps, that it was himself that the Princess appointed as her agent. In that way we shouldn't even appear. That would avoid all the nuisance of scenes, and gratitude, and speeches." M. Verdurin added an expression which made quite plain the kind of touching scenes and speeches which they were anxious to avoid. But it cannot have been reported to me correctly, for it was not a French expression, but one of those terms that are to be found in certain families to denote certain things, annoying things especially, probably because people wish to indicate them in the hearing of the persons concerned

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

without being understood! An expression of this sort is generally a survival from an earlier condition of the family. In a Jewish family, for instance, it will be a ritual term diverted from its true meaning, and perhaps the only Hebrew word with which the family, now thoroughly French, is still acquainted. In a family that is strongly provincial, it will be a term in the local dialect, albeit the family no longer speaks or even understands that dialect. In a family that has come from South America and no longer speaks anything but French, it will be a Spanish word. And, in the next generation, the word will no longer exist save as a childish memory. They may remember quite well that their parents at table used to allude to the servants who were waiting, without being understood by them, by employing some such word, but the children cannot tell exactly what the word meant, whether it was Spanish, Hebrew, German, dialect, if indeed it ever belonged to any language and was not a proper name or a word entirely forged. The uncertainty can be cleared up only if they have a great-uncle, a cousin still surviving who must have used the same expression. As I never knew any relative of the Verdurins, I have never been able to reconstruct the word. All I know is that it certainly drew a smile from Mme. Verdurin, for the use of this language less general, more personal, more secret, than their everyday speech inspires in those who use it among themselves a sense of self-importance which is always accompanied by a certain satisfaction. After this moment of mirth: "But if Cottard talks," Mme. Verdurin objected. "He will not talk." He did mention it, to myself at least, for it was from him that I learned of this incident a few years later, actually at the funeral of

THE CAPTIVE

Saniette. I was sorry that I had not known of it earlier. For one thing the knowledge would have brought me more rapidly to the idea that we ought never to feel resentment towards other people, ought never to judge them by some memory of an unkind action, for we do not know all the good that, at other moments, their hearts may have sincerely desired and realised; no doubt the evil form which we have established once and for all will recur, but the heart is far more rich than that, has many other forms that will recur, also, to these people, whose kindness we refuse to admit because of the occasion on which they behaved badly. Furthermore, this revelation by Cottard must inevitably have had an effect upon me, because by altering my opinion of the Verdurins, this revelation, had it been made to me earlier, would have dispelled the suspicions that I had formed as to the part that the Verdurins might be playing between Albertine and myself, would have dispelled them, wrongly perhaps as it happened, for if M. Verdurin—whom I supposed, with increasing certainty, to be the most malicious man alive—had certain virtues, he was nevertheless tormenting to the point of the most savage persecution, and so jealous of his domination over the little clan as not to shrink from the basest falsehoods, from the fomentation of the most unjustified hatreds, in order to sever any ties between the faithful which had not as their sole object the strengthening of the little group. He was a man capable of disinterested action, of unostentatious generosity, that does not necessarily mean a man of feeling, nor a pleasant man, nor a scrupulous, nor a truthful, nor always a good man. A partial goodness, in which there persisted, perhaps, a trace of the family whom my great-aunt had

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

known, existed probably in him in view of this action before I discovered it, as America or the North Pole existed before Columbus or Peary. Nevertheless, at the moment of my discovery, M. Verdurin's nature offered me a new and unimagined aspect; and so I am brought up against the difficulty of presenting a permanent image as well of a character as of societies and passions. For it changes no less than they, and if we seek to portray what is relatively unchanging in it, we see it present in succession different aspects (implying that it cannot remain still but keeps moving) to the disconcerted artist.

CHAPTER III

Flight of Albertine

SEEING how late it was, and fearing that Albertine might be growing impatient, I asked Brichot, as we left the Verdurins' party, to be so kind as to drop me at my door. My carriage would then take him home. He congratulated me upon going straight home like this (unaware that a girl was waiting for me in the house), and upon ending so early, and so wisely, an evening of which, on the contrary, all that I had done was to postpone the actual beginning. Then he spoke to me about M. de Charlus. The latter would doubtless have been stupefied had he heard the Professor, who was so kind to him, the Professor who always assured him: "I never repeat anything," speaking of him and of his life without the slightest reserve. And Brichot's indignant amazement would perhaps have been no less sincere if M. de Charlus had said to him: "I am told that you have been speaking evil of me." Brichot did indeed feel an affection for M. de Charlus and, if he had had to call to mind some conversation that had turned upon him, would have been far more likely to remember the friendly feeling that he had shewn for the Baron, while he said the same things about him that everyone was saying, than to remember the things that he had said. He would not have thought that he was lying if he had said: "I who speak of you in so friendly a spirit," since he did feel a friendly spirit while he was speaking of M. de Charlus. The Baron

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

had above all for Brichot the charm which the Professor demanded before everything else in his social existence, and which was that of furnishing real examples of what he had long supposed to be an invention of the poets. Brichot, who had often expounded the second Eclogue of Virgil without really knowing whether its fiction had any basis in reality, found later on in conversing with Charlus some of the pleasure which he knew that his masters, M. Mérimée and M. Renan, his colleague M. Maspéro had felt, when travelling in Spain, Palestine, and Egypt, upon recognising in the scenery and the contemporary peoples of Spain, Palestine and Egypt, the setting and the invariable actors of the ancient scenes which they themselves had expounded in their books. "Be it said without offence to that knight of noble lineage," Brichot declared to me in the carriage that was taking us home, "he is simply prodigious when he illustrates his satanic catechism with a distinctly Bedlamite vigour and the persistence, I was going to say the candour, of Spanish whitewash and of a returned *émigré*. I can assure you, if I dare express myself like Mgr. d'Hulst, I am by no means bored upon the days when I receive a visit from that feudal lord who, seeking to defend Adonis against our age of miscreants, has followed the instincts of his race, and, in all sodomist innocence, has gone crusading." I listened to Brichot, and I was not alone with him. As, for that matter, I had never ceased to feel since I left home that evening, I felt myself, in however obscure a fashion, tied fast to the girl who was at that moment in her room. Even when I was talking to some one or other at the Verdurins', I had felt, confusedly, that she was by my side, I had that vague impression of her

THE CAPTIVE

that we have of our own limbs, and if I happened to think of her it was as we think, with disgust at being bound to it in complete subjection, of our own body. "And what a fund of scandal," Brichot went on, "sufficient to supply all the appendices of the *Causeries du Lundi*, is the conversation of that apostle. Imagine that I have learned from him that the ethical treatise which I had always admired as the most splendid moral composition of our age was inspired in our venerable colleague X by a young telegraph messenger. Let us not hesitate to admit that my eminent friend omitted to give us the name of this ephebe in the course of his demonstrations. He has shewn in so doing more human respect, or, if you prefer, less gratitude than Phidias who inscribed the name of the athlete whom he loved upon the ring of his Olympian Zeus. The Baron had not heard that story. Needless to say, it appealed to his orthodox mind. You can readily imagine that whenever I have to discuss with my colleague a candidate's thesis, I shall find in his dialectic, which for that matter is extremely subtle, the additional savour which spicy revelations added, for Sainte-Beuve, to the insufficiently confidential writings of Chateaubriand. From our colleague, who is a goldmine of wisdom but whose gold is not legal tender, the telegraph-boy passed into the hands of the Baron, 'all perfectly proper, of course,' (you ought to hear his voice when he says it). And as this Satan is the most obliging of men, he has found his protégé a post in the Colonies, from which the young man, who has a sense of gratitude, sends him from time to time the most excellent fruit. The Baron offers these to his distinguished friends; some of the young man's pineapples appeared quite recently on the table at Quai

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Conti, drawing from Mme. Verdurin, who at that moment put no malice into her words: 'You must have an uncle or a nephew in America, M. de Charlus, to get pineapples like these!' I admit that if I had known the truth then I should have eaten them with a certain gaiety, repeating to myself *in petto* the opening lines of an Ode of Horace which Diderot loved to recall. In fact, like my colleague Boissier, strolling from the Palatine to Tibur, I derive from the Baron's conversation a singularly more vivid and more savoury idea of the writers of the Augustan age. Let us not even speak of those of the Decadence, nor let us hark back to the Greeks, although I have said to that excellent Baron that in his company I felt like Plato in the house of Aspasia. To tell the truth, I had considerably enlarged the scale of the two characters and, as La Fontaine says, my example was taken 'from lesser animals.' However it be, you do not, I imagine, suppose that the Baron took offence. Never have I seen him so ingenuously delighted. A childish excitement made him depart from his aristocratic phlegm. 'What flatterers all these Sorbonnards are!' he exclaimed with rapture. 'To think that I should have had to wait until my age before being compared to Aspasia! An old image like me! Oh, my youth!' I should like you to have seen him as he said that, outrageously powdered as he always is, and, at his age, scented like a young coxcomb. All the same, beneath his genealogical obsessions, the best fellow in the world. For all these reasons, I should be distressed were this evening's rupture to prove final. What did surprise me was the way in which the young man turned upon him. His manner towards the Baron has been, for some time past, that of a violent partisan, of a feudal vassal,

THE CAPTIVE

which scarcely betokened such an insurrection. I hope that, in any event, even if (*Dii omen avertant*) the Baron were never to return to Quai Conti, this schism is not going to involve myself. Each of us derives too much advantage from the exchange that we make of my feeble stock of learning with his experience." (We shall see that if M. de Charlus, after having hoped in vain that Brichot would bring Morel back to him, shewed no violent rancour against him, at any rate his affection for the Professor vanished so completely as to allow him to judge him without any indulgence.) "And I swear to you that the exchange is so much in my favour that when the Baron yields up to me what his life has taught him, I am unable to endorse the opinion of Sylvestre Bonnard that a library is still the best place in which to ponder the dream of life."

We had now reached my door. I got out of the carriage to give the driver Brichot's address. From the pavement, I could see the window of Albertine's room, that window, formerly quite black, at night, when she was not staying in the house, which the electric light inside, dissected by the slats of the shutters, striped from top to bottom with parallel bars of gold. This magic scroll, clear as it was to myself, tracing before my tranquil mind precise images, near at hand, of which I should presently be taking possession, was completely invisible to Brichot who had remained in the carriage, almost blind, and would moreover have been completely incomprehensible to him could he have seen it, since, like the friends who called upon me before dinner, when Albertine had returned from her drive, the Professor was unaware that a girl who was all my own was waiting for

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

me in a bedroom adjoining mine. The carriage drove on. I remained for a moment alone upon the pavement. To be sure, these luminous rays which I could see from below and which to anyone else would have seemed merely superficial, I endowed with the utmost consistency, plenitude, solidity, in view of all the significance that I placed behind them, in a treasure unsuspected by the rest of the world which I had concealed there and from which those horizontal rays emanated, a treasure if you like, but a treasure in exchange for which I had forfeited my freedom, my solitude, my thought. If Albertine had not been there, and indeed if I had merely been in search of pleasure, I would have gone to demand it of unknown women, into whose life I should have attempted to penetrate, at Venice perhaps, or at least in some corner of nocturnal Paris. But now all that I had to do when the time came for me to receive caresses, was not to set forth upon a journey, was not even to leave my own house, but to return there. And to return there not to find myself alone, and, after taking leave of the friends who furnished me from outside with food for thought, to find myself at any rate compelled to seek it in myself, but to be on the contrary less alone than when I was at the Verdurins', welcomed as I should be by the person to whom I abdicated, to whom I handed over most completely my own person, without having for an instant the leisure to think of myself nor even requiring the effort, since she would be by my side, to think of her. So that as I raised my eyes to look for the last time from outside at the window of the room in which I should presently find myself, I seemed to behold the luminous gates which were about to close behind me and of which I myself had

THE CAPTIVE

forged, for an eternal slavery, the unyielding bars of gold.

Our engagement had assumed the form of a criminal trial and gave Albertine the timidity of a guilty party. Now she changed the conversation whenever it turned upon people, men or women, who were not of mature years. It was when she had not yet suspected that I was jealous of her that I could have asked her to tell me what I wanted to know. We ought always to take advantage of that period. It is then that our mistress tells us of her pleasures and even of the means by which she conceals them from other people. She would no longer have admitted to me now as she had admitted at Balbec (partly because it was true, partly in order to excuse herself for not making her affection for myself more evident, for I had already begun to weary her even then, and she had gathered from my kindness to her that she need not shew it to me as much as to other men in order to obtain more from me than from them), she would no longer have admitted to me now as she had admitted then: "I think it stupid to let people see that one is in love; I'm just the opposite, as soon as a person appeals to me, I pretend not to take any notice of him. In that way, nobody knows anything about it."

What, it was the same Albertine of to-day, with her pretensions to frankness and indifference to all the world who had told me this! She would never have informed me of such a rule of conduct now! She contented herself when she was talking to me with applying it, by saying of somebody or other who might cause me anxiety: "Oh, I don't know, I never noticed them, they don't count." And from time to time, to anticipate discoveries which I might make, she would proffer those confessions which

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

their accent, before one knows the reality which they are intended to alter, to render innocent, denounces already as being falsehoods.

Albertine had never told me that she suspected me of being jealous of her, preoccupied with everything that she did. The only words—and that, I must add, was long ago—which we had exchanged with regard to jealousy seemed to prove the opposite. I remembered that, on a fine moonlight evening, towards the beginning of our intimacy, on one of the first occasions when I had accompanied her home, and when I would have been just as glad not to do so and to leave her in order to run after other girls, I had said to her: “You know, if I am offering to take you home, it is not from jealousy; if you have anything else to do, I shall slip discreetly away.” And she had replied: “Oh, I know quite well that you aren’t jealous and that it’s all the same to you, but I’ve nothing else to do except to stay with you.” Another occasion was at la Raspelière, when M. de Charlus, not without casting a covert glance at Morel, had made a display of friendly gallantry towards Albertine; I had said to her: “Well, he gave you a good hug, I hope.” And as I had added half ironically: “I suffered all the torments of jealousy,” Albertine, employing the language proper either to the vulgar class from which she sprang or to that other, more vulgar still, which she frequented, replied: “What a fusspot you are! I know quite well you’re not jealous. For one thing, you told me so, and besides, it’s perfectly obvious, get along with you!” She had never told me since then that she had changed her mind; but there must all the same have developed in her, upon that subject, a number of fresh ideas, which

THE CAPTIVE

she concealed from me but which an accident might, in spite of her, betray, for this evening when, having gone indoors, after going to fetch her from her own room and taking her to mine, I had said to her (with a certain awkwardness which I did not myself understand, for I had indeed told Albertine that I was going to pay a call, and had said that I did not know where, perhaps upon Mme. de Villeparisis, perhaps upon Mme. de Guermantes, perhaps upon Mme. de Cambremer; it is true that I had not actually mentioned the Verdurins): "Guess where I have been; at the Verdurins'," I had barely had time to utter the words before Albertine, a look of utter consternation upon her face, had answered me in words which seemed to explode of their own accord with a force which she was unable to contain: "I thought as much." "I didn't know that you would be annoyed by my going to see the Verdurins." It is true that she did not tell me that she was annoyed, but that was obvious; it is true also that I had not said to myself that she would be annoyed. And yet in the face of the explosion of her wrath, as in the face of those events which a sort of retrospective second sight makes us imagine that we have already known in the past, it seemed to me that I could never have expected anything else. "Annoyed? What do you suppose I care, where you've been. It's all the same to me. Wasn't Mlle. Vinteuil there?" Losing all control of myself at these words: "You never told me that you had met her the other day," I said to her, to shew her that I was better informed than she knew. Believing that the person whom I reproached her for having met without telling me was Mme. Verdurin, and not, as I meant to imply, Mlle. Vinteuil: "Did I meet her?" she inquired

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

with a pensive air, addressing at once herself as though she were seeking to collect her fugitive memories and myself as though it were I that ought to have told her of the meeting; and no doubt in order that I might say what I knew, perhaps also in order to gain time before making a difficult response. But I was preoccupied with the thought of Mlle. Vinteuil, and still more with a dread which had already entered my mind but which now gripped me in a violent clutch, the dread that Albertine might be longing for freedom. When I came home I had supposed that Mme. Verdurin had purely and simply invented, to enhance her own' renown, the story of her having expected Mlle. Vinteuil and her friend, so that I was quite calm. Albertine, merely by saying: "Wasn't Mlle. Vinteuil there?" had shewn me that I had not been mistaken in my original suspicion; but anyhow my mind was set at rest in that quarter for the future, since by giving up her plan of visiting the Verdurins' and going instead to the Trocadéro, Albertine had sacrificed Mlle. Vinteuil. But, at the Trocadéro, from which, for that matter, she had come away in order to go for a drive with myself, there had been as a reason to make her leave it the presence of Léa. As I thought of this I mentioned Léa by name, and Albertine, distrustful, supposing that I had perhaps heard something more, took the initiative and exclaimed volubly, not without partly concealing her face: "I know her quite well; we went last year, some of my friends and I, to see her act: after the performance we went behind to her dressing-room, she changed in front of us. It was most interesting." Then my mind was compelled to relinquish Mlle. Vinteuil and, in a desperate effort, racing through the abysses of pos-

THE CAPTIVE

sible reconstructions, attached itself to the actress, to that evening when Albertine had gone behind to her dressing-room. On the other hand, after all the oaths that she had sworn to me, and in so truthful a tone, after the so complete sacrifice of her freedom, how was I to suppose that there was any evil in all this affair? And yet, were not my suspicions feelers pointing in the direction of the truth, since if she had made me a sacrifice of the Verdurins in order to go to the Trocadéro, nevertheless at the Verdurins' Mlle. Vinteuil was expected, and, at the Trocadéro, there had been Léa, who seemed to me to be disturbing me without cause and whom all the same, in that speech which I had not demanded of her, she admitted that she had known upon a larger scale than that of my fears, in circumstances that were indeed shady? For what could have induced her to go behind like that to that dressing-room? If I ceased to suffer because of Mlle. Vinteuil when I suffered because of Léa, those two tormentors of my day, it was either on account of the inability of my mind to picture too many scenes at one time, or on account of the interference of my nervous emotions of which my jealousy was but the echo. I could induce from them only that she had belonged no more to Léa than to Mlle. Vinteuil and that I was thinking of Léa only because the thought of her still caused me pain. But the fact that my twin jealousies were dying down—to revive now and then, alternately—does not, in any way, mean that they did not on the contrary correspond each to some truth of which I had had a foreboding, that of these women I must not say to myself none, but all. I say a foreboding, for I could not project myself to all the points of time

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

and space which I should have had to visit, and besides, what instinct would have given me the coordinate of one with another necessary to enable me to surprise Albertine, here, at one moment, with Léa, or with the Balbec girls, or with that friend of Mme. Bontemps whom she had jostled, or with the girl on the tennis-court who had nudged her with her elbow, or with Mlle. Vinteuil?

I must add that what had appeared to me most serious, and had struck me as most symptomatic, was that she had forestalled my accusation, that she had said to me: "Wasn't Mlle. Vinteuil there?" to which I had replied in the most brutal fashion imaginable: "You never told me that you had met her." Thus as soon as I found Albertine no longer obliging, instead of telling her that I was sorry, I became malicious. There was then a moment in which I felt a sort of hatred of her which only intensified my need to keep her in captivity.

"Besides," I said to her angrily, "there are plenty of other things which you hide from me, even the most trivial things, such as for instance when you went for three days to Balbec, I mention it in passing." I had added the words "I mention it in passing" as a complement to "even the most trivial things" so that if Albertine said to me "What was there wrong about my trip to Balbec?" I might be able to answer: "Why, I've quite forgotten. I get so confused about the things people tell me, I attach so little importance to them." And indeed if I referred to those three days which she had spent in an excursion with the chauffeur to Balbec, from where her postcards had reached me after so long an interval, I referred to them purely at random and regretted that I had chosen so bad an example, for in fact,

THE CAPTIVE

as they had barely had time to go there and return, it was certainly the one excursion in which there had not even been time for the interpolation of a meeting at all protracted with anybody. But Albertine supposed, from what I had just said, that I was fully aware of the real facts, and had merely concealed my knowledge from her; so she had been convinced, for some time past, that, in one way or another, I was having her followed, or in short was somehow or other, as she had said the week before to Andrée, better informed than herself about her own life. And so she interrupted me with a wholly futile admission, for certainly I suspected nothing of what she now told me, and I was on the other hand appalled, so vast can the disparity be between the truth which a liar has disguised and the idea which, from her lies, the man who is in love with the said liar has formed of the truth. Scarcely had I uttered the words: "When you went for three days to Balbec, I mention it in passing," before Albertine, cutting me short, declared as a thing that was perfectly natural: "You mean to say that I never went to Balbec at all? Of course I didn't! And I have always wondered why you pretended to believe that I had. All the same, there was no harm in it. The driver had some business of his own for three days. He didn't like to mention it to you. And so, out of kindness to him (it was my doing! Besides it is always I that have to bear the brunt), I invented a trip to Balbec. He simply put me down at Auteuil, with my friend in the Rue de l'Assomption, where I spent the three days bored to tears. You see it is not a serious matter, there's nothing broken. I did indeed begin to suppose that you perhaps knew all about it, when I saw how you laughed when the postcards

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

began to arrive, a week late. I quite see that it was absurd, and that it would have been better not to send any cards. But that wasn't my fault. I had bought the cards beforehand and given them to the driver before he dropped me at Auteuil, and then the fathead put them in his pocket and forgot about them instead of sending them on in an envelope to a friend of his near Balbec who was to forward them to you. I kept on supposing that they would turn up. He forgot all about them for five days, and instead of telling me the idiot sent them on at once to Balbec. When he did tell me, I fairly broke it over him, I can tell you! 'And you go and make a stupid fuss, when it's all the fault of that great fool, as a reward for my shutting myself up for three whole days, so that he might go and look after his family affairs. I didn't even venture to go out into Auteuil for fear of being seen. The only time that I did go out, I was dressed as a man, and that was a funny business. And it was just my luck, which follows me wherever I go, that the first person I came across was your Yid friend Bloch. But I don't believe it was from him that you learned that my trip to Balbec never existed except in my imagination, for he seemed not to recognise me."

I did not know what to say, not wishing to appear astonished, while I was appalled by all these lies. With a sense of horror, which gave me no desire to turn Albertine out of the house, far from it, was combined a strong inclination to burst into tears. This last was caused not by the lie itself and by the annihilation of everything that I had so stoutly believed to be true that I felt as though I were in a town that had been razed to the ground, where not a house remained standing, where

THE CAPTIVE

the bare soil was merely heaped with rubble—but by the melancholy thought that, during those three days when she had been bored to tears in her friend's house at Auteuil, Albertine had never once felt any desire, the idea had perhaps never occurred to her to come and pay me a visit one day on the quiet, or to send a message asking me to go and see her at Auteuil. But I had not time to give myself up to these reflexions. Whatever happened, I did not wish to appear surprised. I smiled with the air of a man who knows far more than he is going to say: “But that is only one thing out of a thousand. For instance, you knew that Mlle. Vinteuil was expected at Mme. Verdurin's, this afternoon when you went to the Trocadéro.” She blushed: “Yes, I knew that.” “Can you swear to me that it was not in order to renew your relations with her that you wanted to go to the Verdurins'?” “Why, of course I can swear. Why do you say renew, I never had any relations with her, I swear it.” I was appalled to hear Albertine lie to me like this, deny the facts which her blush had made all too evident. Her mendacity appalled me. And yet, as it contained a protestation of innocence which, almost unconsciously, I was prepared to accept, it hurt me less than her sincerity when, after I had asked her: “Can you at least swear to me that the pleasure of seeing Mlle. Vinteuil again had nothing to do with your anxiety to go this afternoon to the Verdurins' party?” she replied: “No, that I cannot swear. It would have been a great pleasure to see Mlle. Vinteuil again.” A moment earlier, I had been angry with her because she concealed her relations with Mlle. Vinteuil, and now her admission of the pleasure that she would have felt in seeing her again turned my bones to

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

water. For that matter, the mystery in which she had cloaked her intention of going to see the Verdurins ought to have been a sufficient proof. But I had not given the matter enough thought. Although she was now telling me the truth, why did she admit only half, it was even more stupid than it was wicked and wretched. I was so crushed that I had not the courage to insist upon this question, as to which I was not in a strong position, having no damning evidence to produce, and to recover my ascendancy, I hurriedly turned to a subject which would enable me to put Albertine to rout: "Listen, only this evening, at the Verdurins', I learned that what you had told me about Mlle. Vinteuil. . . ." Albertine gazed at me fixedly with a tormented air, seeking to read in my eyes how much I knew. Now, what I knew and what I was about to tell her as to Mlle. Vinteuil's true nature, it was true that it was not at the Verdurins' that I had learned it, but at Montjouvain long ago. Only, as I had always refrained, deliberately, from mentioning it to Albertine, I could now appear to have learned it only this evening. And I could almost feel a joy—after having felt, on the little tram, so keen an anguish—at possessing this memory of Montjouvain, which I postdated, but which would nevertheless be the unanswerable proof, a crushing blow to Albertine. This time at least, I had no need to "seem to know" and to "make Albertine speak"; I did know, I had seen through the lighted window at Montjouvain. It had been all very well for Albertine to tell me that her relations with Mlle. Vinteuil and her friend had been perfectly pure, how could she when I swore to her (and swore without lying) that I knew the habits of these two women, how could she

THE CAPTIVE

maintain any longer that, having lived in a daily intimacy with them, calling them "my big sisters," she had not been approached by them with suggestions which would have made her break with them, if on the contrary she had not complied? But I had no time to tell her what I knew. Albertine, imagining, as in the case of the pretended excursion to Balbec, that I had learned the truth, either from Mlle. Vinteuil, if she had been at the Verdurins', or simply from Mme. Verdurin herself who might have mentioned her to Mlle. Vinteuil, did not allow me to speak but made a confession, the exact opposite of what I had supposed, which nevertheless, by shewing me that she had never ceased to lie to me, caused me perhaps just as much grief (especially since I was no longer, as I said a moment ago, jealous of Mlle. Vinteuil); in short, taking the words out of my mouth, Albertine proceeded to say: "You mean to tell me that you found out this evening that I lied to you when I pretended that I had been more or less brought up by Mlle. Vinteuil's friend. It is true that I did lie to you a little. But I felt that you despised me so, I saw too that you were so keen upon that man Vinteuil's music that as one of my school friends—this is true, I swear to you—had been a friend of Mlle. Vinteuil's friend, I stupidly thought that I might make myself seem interesting to you by inventing the story that I had known the girls quite well. I felt that I was boring you, that you thought me a goose, I thought that if I told you that those people used to see a lot of me, that I could easily tell you all sorts of things about Vinteuil's work, I should acquire a little importance in your eyes, that it would draw us together. When I lie to you, it is always out of affection for you. And it

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

needed this fatal Verdurin party to open your eyes to the truth, which has been a bit exaggerated besides. I bet, Mlle. Vinteuil's friend told you that she did not know me. She met me at least twice at my friend's house. But of course, I am not smart enough for people like that who have become celebrities. They prefer to say that they have never met me." Poor Albertine, when she imagined that to tell me that she had been so intimate with Mlle. Vinteuil's friend would postpone her own dismissal, would draw her nearer to me, she had, as so often happens, attained the truth by a different road from that which she had intended to take. Her shewing herself better informed about music than I had supposed would never have prevented me from breaking with her that evening, on the little tram; and yet it was indeed that speech, which she had made with that object, which had immediately brought about far more than the impossibility of a rupture. Only she made an error in her interpretation, not of the effect which that speech was to have, but of the cause by virtue of which it was to produce that effect, a cause which was my discovery not of her musical culture, but of her evil associations. What had abruptly drawn me to her, what was more, merged me in her was not the expectation of a pleasure—and pleasure is too strong a word, a slight interest—it was a wringing grief.

Once again I had to be careful not to keep too long a silence which might have led her to suppose that I was surprised. And so, touched by the discovery that she was so modest and had thought herself despised in the Verdurin circle, I said to her tenderly: "But, my darling, I would gladly give you several hundred francs to let you go and play the fashionable lady wherever you please and

THE CAPTIVE

invite M. and Mme. Verdurin to a grand dinner." Alas! Albertine was several persons in one. The most mysterious, most simple, most atrocious revealed herself in the answer which she made me with an air of disgust and the exact words to tell the truth I could not quite make out (even the opening words, for she did not finish her sentence). I succeeded in establishing them only a little later when I had guessed what was in her mind. We hear things retrospectively when we have understood them. "Thank you for nothing! Fancy spending a cent upon those old frumps, I'd a great deal rather you left me alone for once in a way so that I can go and get some one decent to break my" As she uttered the words, her face flushed crimson, a look of terror came to her eyes, she put her hand over her mouth as though she could have thrust back the words which she had just uttered and which I had completely failed to understand. "What did you say, Albertine?" "No, nothing, I was half asleep and talking to myself." "Not a bit of it, you were wide awake." "I was thinking about asking the Verdurins to dinner, it is very good of you." "No, I mean what you said just now." She gave me endless versions, none of which agreed in the least, I do not say with her words which, being interrupted, remained vague, but with the interruption itself and the sudden flush that had accompanied it. "Come, my darling, that is not what you were going to say, otherwise why did you stop short." "Because I felt that my request was indiscreet." "What request?" "To be allowed to give a dinner-party." "No, it is not that, there is no need of discretion between you and me." "Indeed there is, we ought never to take advantage of the people we love. In any case, I swear

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

to you that that was all." On the one hand it was still impossible for me to doubt her sworn word, on the other hand her explanations did not satisfy my critical spirit. I continued to press her. "Anyhow, you might at least have the courage to finish what you were saying, you stopped short at *break*." "No, leave me alone!" "But why?" "Because it is dreadfully vulgar, I should be ashamed to say such a thing in front of you. I don't know what I was thinking of, the words—I don't even know what they mean, I heard them used in the street one day by some very low people—just came to my lips without rhyme or reason. It had nothing to do with me or anybody else, I was simply dreaming aloud." I felt that I should extract nothing more from Albertine. She had lied to me when she had sworn, a moment ago, that what had cut her short had been a social fear of being indiscreet, since it had now become the shame of letting me hear her use a vulgar expression. Now this was certainly another lie. For when we were alone together there was no speech too perverse, no word too coarse for us to utter among our embraces. Anyhow, it was useless to insist at that moment. But my memory remained obsessed by the word "break". Albertine frequently spoke of "breaking sticks" or "breaking sugar" over some one, or would simply say: "Ah! I fairly broke it over him!" meaning "I fairly gave it to him!" But she would say this quite freely in my presence, and if it was this that she had meant to say, why had she suddenly stopped short, why had she blushed so deeply, placed her hands over her mouth, given a fresh turn to her speech, and, when she saw that I had heard the word "break," offered a false explanation. But as soon as I had aban-

THE CAPTIVE

done the pursuit of an interrogation from which I received no response, the only thing to do was to appear to have lost interest in the matter, and, retracing my thoughts to Albertine's reproaches of me for having gone to the Mistress's, I said to her, very awkwardly, making indeed a sort of stupid excuse for my conduct: "Why, I had been meaning to ask you to come to the Verdurins' party this evening," a speech that was doubly maladroit, for if I meant it, since I had been with her all the day, why should I not have made the suggestion? Furious at my lie and emboldened by my timidity: "You might have gone on asking me for a thousand years," she said, "I would never have consented. They are people who have always been against me, they have done everything they could to upset me. There was nothing I didn't do for Mme. Verdurin at Balbec, and I've been finely rewarded. If she summoned me to her deathbed, I wouldn't go. There are some things which it is impossible to forgive. As for you, it's the first time you've treated me badly. When Françoise told me that you had gone out (she enjoyed telling me that, I don't think), you might have knocked me down with a feather. I tried not to shew any sign, but never in my life have I been so insulted." While she was speaking, there continued in myself, in the thoroughly alive and creative sleep of the unconscious (a sleep in which the things that barely touch us succeed in carving an impression, in which our hands take hold of the key that turns the lock, the key for which we have sought in vain), the quest of what it was that she had meant by that interrupted speech the end of which I was so anxious to know. And all of a sudden an appalling word, of which I had never

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

dreamed, burst upon me: "pot". I cannot say that it came to me in a single flash, as when, in a long passive submission to an incomplete memory, while we try gently, cautiously, to draw it out, we remain fastened, glued to it. No, in contrast to the ordinary process of my memory, there were, I think, two parallel quests; the first took into account not merely Albertine's words, but her look of extreme annoyance when I had offered her a sum of money with which to give a grand dinner, a look which seemed to say: "Thank you, the idea of spending money upon things that bore me, when without money I could do things that I enjoy doing!" And it was perhaps the memory of this look that she had given me which made me alter my method in discovering the end of her unfinished sentence. Until then I had been hypnotised by her last word: "break," she had meant to say break what? Break wood? No. Sugar? No. Break, break, break. And all at once the look that she had given me at the moment of my suggestion that she should give a dinner-party, turned me back to the words that had preceded. And immediately I saw that she had not said "break" but "get some one to break." Horror! It was this that she would have preferred. Twofold horror! For even the vilest of prostitutes, who consents to that sort of thing, or desires it, does not employ to the man who yields to her desires that appalling expression. She would feel the degradation too great. To a woman alone, if she loves women, she says this, as an excuse for giving herself presently to a man. Albertine had not been lying when she told me that she was speaking in a dream. Distracted, impulsive, not realising that she was with me, she had, with a shrug of her shoulders, begun to speak as

THE CAPTIVE

she would have spoken to one of those women, to one, perhaps, of my young budding girls. And abruptly recalled to reality, crimson with shame, thrusting back between her lips what she was going to say, plunged in despair, she had refused to utter another word. I had not a moment to lose if I was not to let her see how desperate I was. But already, after my sudden burst of rage, the tears came to my eyes. As at Balbec, on the night that followed her revelation of her friendship with the Vinteuil pair, I must immediately invent a plausible excuse for my grief, and one that was at the same time capable of creating so profound an effect upon Albertine as to give me a few days' respite before I came to a decision. And so, at the moment when she told me that she had never received such an insult as that which I had inflicted upon her by going out, that she would rather have died than hear Françoise tell her of my departure, when, as though irritated by her absurd susceptibility, I was on the point of telling her that what I had done was nothing, that there was nothing that could offend her in my going out—as, during these moments, moving on a parallel course, my unconscious quest for what she had meant to say after the word “break” had proved successful, and the despair into which my discovery flung me could not be completely hidden, instead of defending, I accused myself. “My little Albertine,” I said to her in a gentle voice which was drowned in my first tears, “I might tell you that you are mistaken, that what I did this evening is nothing, but I should be lying; it is you that are right, you have realised the truth, my poor child, which is that six months ago, three months ago, when I was still so fond of you, never would I have done such a

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

thing. It is a mere nothing, and it is enormous, because of the immense change in my heart of which it is the sign. And since you have detected this change which I hoped to conceal from you, that leads me on to tell you this: My little Albertine" (and here I addressed her with a profound gentleness and melancholy), "don't you see, the life that you are leading here is boring to you, it is better that we should part, and as the best partings are those that are ended at once, I ask you, to cut short the great sorrow that I am bound to feel, to bid me good-bye to-night and to leave in the morning without my seeing you again, while I am asleep." She appeared stupefied, still incredulous and already disconsolate: "To-morrow? You really mean it?" And notwithstanding the anguish that I felt in speaking of our parting as though it were already in the past—partly perhaps because of that very anguish—I began to give Albertine the most precise instructions as to certain things which she would have to do after she left the house. And passing from one request to another, I soon found myself entering into the minutest details. "Be so kind," I said, with infinite melancholy, "as to send me back that book of Bergotte's which is at your aunt's. There is no hurry about it, in three days, in a week, whenever you like, but remember that I don't want to have to write and ask you for it, that would be too painful. We have been happy together, we feel now that we should be unhappy." "Don't say that we feel that we should be unhappy," Albertine interrupted me, "don't say 'we,' it is only you who feel that." "Yes, very well, you or I, as you like, for one reason or another. But it is absurdly late, you must go to bed—we have decided to part to-night." "Pardon me, *you* have decided,

THE CAPTIVE

and I obey you because I do not wish to cause you any trouble." "Very well, it is I who have decided, but that makes it none the less painful for me. I do not say that it will be painful for long, you know that I have not the faculty of remembering things for long, but for the first few days I shall be so miserable without you. And so I feel that it will be useless to revive the memory with letters, we must end everything at once." "Yes, you are right," she said to me with a crushed air, which was enhanced by the strain of fatigue upon her features due to the lateness of the hour; "rather than have one finger chopped off, then another, I prefer to lay my head on the block at once." "Heavens, I am appalled when I think how late I am keeping you out of bed, it is madness. However, it's the last night! You will have plenty of time to sleep for the rest of your life." And as I suggested to her thus that it was time to say good night I sought to postpone the moment when she would have said it. "Would you like me, as a distraction during the first few days, to tell Bloch to send his cousin Esther to the place where you will be staying, he will do that for me." "I don't know why you say that" (I had said it in an endeavour to wrest a confession from Albertine); "there is only one person for whom I care, which is yourself," Albertine said to me, and her words filled me with comfort. But, the next moment, what a blow she dealt me! "I remember, of course, that I did give Esther my photograph because she kept on asking me for it and I saw that she would like to have it, but as for feeling any liking for her or wishing ever to see her again. . . ." And yet Albertine was of so frivolous a nature that she went on: "If she wants to see me, it is

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

all the same to me, she is very nice, but I don't care in the least either way." And so when I had spoken to her of the photograph of Esther which Bloch had sent me (and which I had not even received when I mentioned it to Albertine) my mistress had gathered that Bloch had shewn me a photograph of herself, given by her to Esther. In my worst suppositions, I had never imagined that any such intimacy could have existed between Albertine and Esther. Albertine had found no words in which to answer me when I spoke of the photograph. And now, supposing me, wrongly, to be in the know, she thought it better to confess. I was appalled. "And, Albertine, let me ask you to do me one more favour, never attempt to see me again. If at any time, as may happen in a year, in two years, in three years, we should find ourselves in the same town, keep away from me." Then, seeing that she did not reply in the affirmative to my prayer: "My Albertine, never see me again in this world. It would hurt me too much. For I was really fond of you, you know. Of course, when I told you the other day that I wanted to see the friend again whom I mentioned to you at Balbec, you thought that it was all settled. Not at all, I assure you, it was quite immaterial to me. You were convinced that I had long made up my mind to leave you, that my affection was all make-believe." "No indeed, you are mad, I never thought so," she said sadly. "You are right, you must never think so, I did genuinely feel for you, not love perhaps, but a great, a very great affection, more than you can imagine." "I can, indeed. And do you suppose that I don't love you!" "It hurts me terribly to have to give you up." "It hurts me a thousand times more," replied

THE CAPTIVE

Albertine. A moment earlier I had felt that I could no longer restrain the tears that came welling up in my eyes. And these tears did not spring from at all the same sort of misery which I had felt long ago when I said to Gilberte: "It is better that we should not see one another again, life is dividing us." No doubt when I wrote this to Gilberte, I said to myself that when I should be in love not with her but with another, the excess of my love would diminish that which I might perhaps have been able to inspire, as though two people must inevitably have only a certain quantity of love at their disposal; of which the surplus taken by one is subtracted from the other, and that from her too, as from Gilberte, I should be doomed to part. But the situation was entirely different for several reasons, the first of which (and it had, in its turn, given rise to the others) was that the lack of will-power which my grandmother and mother had observed in me with alarm, at Combray, and before which each of them, so great is the energy with which a sick man imposes his weakness upon others, had capitulated in turn, this lack of will-power had gone on increasing at an ever accelerated pace. When I felt that my company was boring Gilberte, I had still enough strength left to give her up; I had no longer the same strength when I had made a similar discovery with regard to Albertine, and could think only of keeping her at any cost to myself. With the result that, whereas I wrote to Gilberte that I would not see her again, meaning quite sincerely not to see her, I said this to Albertine as a pure falsehood, and in the hope of bringing about a reconciliation. Thus we presented each to the other an appearance which was widely different from the reality. And no doubt it is always so

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

when two people stand face to face, since each of them is ignorant of a part of what exists in the other (even what he knows, he can understand only in part) and since both of them display what is the least personal thing about them, whether because they have not explored themselves and regard as negligible what is most important, or because insignificant advantages which have no place in themselves seem to them more important and more flattering. But in love this misunderstanding is carried to its supreme pitch because, except perhaps when we are children, we endeavour to make the appearance that we assume, rather than reflect exactly what is in our mind, be what our mind considers best adapted to enable us to obtain what we desire, which in my case, since my return to the house, was to be able to keep Albertine as docile as she had been in the past, was that she should not in her irritation ask me for a greater freedom, which I intended to give her one day, but which at this moment, when I was afraid of her cravings for independence, would have made me too jealous. After a certain age, from self-esteem and from sagacity, it is to the things which we most desire that we pretend to attach no importance. But in love, our mere sagacity—which for that matter is probably not the true wisdom—forces us speedily enough to this genius for duplicity. All that I had dreamed, as a boy, to be the sweetest thing in love, what had seemed to me to be the very essence of love, was to pour out freely, before the feet of her whom I loved, my affection, my gratitude for her kindness, my longing for a perpetual life together. But I had become only too well aware, from my own experience and from that of my friends, that the expression of such sentiments is far from being

THE CAPTIVE

contagious. Once we have observed this, we no longer "let ourself go"; I had taken good care in the afternoon not to tell Albertine how grateful I was to her that she had not remained at the Trocadéro. And to-night, having been afraid that she might leave me, I had feigned a desire to part from her, a feint which for that matter was not suggested to me merely by the enlightenment which I supposed myself to have received from my former loves and was seeking to bring to the service of this.

The fear that Albertine was perhaps going to say to me: "I wish to be allowed to go out by myself at certain hours, I wish to be able to stay away for a night," in fact any request of that sort, which I did not attempt to define, but which alarmed me, this fear had entered my mind for a moment before and during the Verdurins' party. But it had been dispelled, contradicted moreover by the memory of how Albertine assured me incessantly how happy she was with me. The intention to leave me, if it existed in Albertine, was made manifest only in an obscure fashion, in certain sorrowful glances, certain gestures of impatience, speeches which meant nothing of the sort, but which, if one analysed them (and there was not even any need of analysis, for we can immediately detect the language of passion, the lower orders themselves understand these speeches which can be explained only by vanity, rancour, jealousy, unexpressed as it happens, but revealing itself at once to the listener by an intuitive faculty which, like the "good sense" of which Descartes speaks, is the most widespread thing in the world), revealed the presence in her of a sentiment which she concealed and which might lead her to form plans for another life apart from myself. Just as this

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

intention was not expressed in her speech in a logical fashion, so the presentiment of this intention, which I had felt to-night, remained just as vague in myself. I continued to live by the hypothesis which admitted as true everything that Albertine told me. But it may be that in myself, during this time, a wholly contrary hypothesis, of which I refused to think, never left me; this is all the more probable since, otherwise, I should have felt no hesitation in telling Albertine that I had been to the Verdurins', and, indeed, my want of astonishment at her anger would not have been comprehensible. So that what probably existed in me was the idea of an Albertine entirely opposite to that which my reason formed of her, to that also which her own speech portrayed, an Albertine that all the same was not wholly invented, since she was like a prophetic mirror of certain impulses that occurred in her, such as her ill humour at my having gone to the Verdurins'. Besides, for a long time past, my frequent anguish, my fear of telling Albertine that I loved her, all this corresponded to another hypothesis which explained many things besides, and had also this to be said for it, that, if one adopted the first hypothesis, the second became more probable, for by allowing myself to give way to effusive tenderness for Albertine, I obtained from her nothing but irritation (to which moreover she assigned a different cause).

If I analyse my feelings by this hypothesis, by the invariable system of retorts expressing the exact opposite of what I was feeling, I can be quite certain that if, to-night, I told her that I was going to send her away, it was—at first, quite unconsciously—because I was afraid that she might desire her freedom (I should have been

THE CAPTIVE

put to it to say what this freedom was that made me tremble, but anyhow some state of freedom in which she would have been able to deceive me, or, at least, I should no longer have been able to be certain that she was not) and wished to shew her, from pride, from cunning, that I was very far from fearing anything of the sort, as I had done already, at Balbec, when I was anxious that she should have a good opinion of me, and later on, when I was anxious that she should not have time to feel bored with me. In short, the objection that might be offered to this second hypothesis—which I did not formulate,—that everything that Albertine said to me indicated on the contrary that the life which she preferred was the life in my house, resting, reading, solitude, a loathing of Sapphic loves, and so forth, need not be considered seriously. For if on her part Albertine had chosen to interpret my feelings from what I said to her, she would have learned the exact opposite of the truth, since I never expressed a desire to part from her except when I was unable to do without her, and at Balbec I had confessed to her that I was in love with another woman, first Andrée, then a mysterious stranger, on the two occasions on which jealousy had revived my love for Albertine. My words, therefore, did not in the least reflect my sentiments. If the reader has no more than a faint impression of these, that is because, as narrator, I reveal my sentiments to him at the same time as I repeat my words. But if I concealed the former and he were acquainted only with the latter, my actions, so little in keeping with my speech, would so often give him the impression of strange revulsions of feeling that he would think me almost mad. A procedure which would not, for that

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

matter, be much more false than that which I have adopted, for the images which prompted me to action, so opposite to those which were portrayed in my speech, were at that moment extremely obscure; I was but imperfectly aware of the nature which guided my actions; at present, I have a clear conception of its subjective truth. As for its objective truth, that is to say whether the inclinations of that nature grasped more exactly than my reason Albertine's true intentions, whether I was right to trust to that nature or on the contrary it did not corrupt Albertine's intentions instead of making them plain, that I find difficult to say. That vague fear which I had felt at the Verdurins' that Albertine might leave me had been at once dispelled. When I returned home, it had been with the feeling that I myself was a captive, not with that of finding a captive in the house. But the dispelled fear had gripped me all the more violently when, at the moment of my informing Albertine that I had been to the Verdurins', I saw her face veiled with a look of enigmatic irritation which moreover was not making itself visible for the first time. I knew quite well that it was only the crystallisation in the flesh of reasoned complaints, of ideas clear to the person who forms and does not express them, a synthesis rendered visible but not therefore rational, which the man who gathers its precious residue from the face of his beloved, endeavours in his turn, so that he may understand what is occurring in her, to reduce by analysis to its intellectual elements. The approximate equation of that unknown quantity which Albertine's thoughts were to me, had given me, more or less: "I knew his suspicions, I was sure that he would attempt to verify them, and so that I might not hinder

THE CAPTIVE

him, he has worked out his little plan in secret." But if this was the state of mind (and she had never expressed it to me) in which Albertine was living, must she not regard with horror, find the strength fail her to carry on, might she not at any moment decide to terminate an existence in which, if she was, in desire at any rate, guilty, she must feel herself exposed, tracked down, prevented from ever yielding to her instincts, without thereby disarming my jealousy, and if innocent in intention and fact, she had had every right, for some time past, to feel discouraged, seeing that never once, from Balbec, where she had shewn so much perseverance in avoiding the risk of her ever being left alone with Andrée, until this very day when she had agreed not to go to the Verdurins' and not to stay at the Trocadéro, had she succeeded in regaining my confidence. All the more so as I could not say that her behaviour was not exemplary. If at Balbec, when anyone mentioned girls who had a bad style, she used often to copy their laughter, their wriggings, their general manner, which was a torture to me because of what I supposed that it must mean to her girl friends, now that she knew my opinion on the subject, as soon as anyone made an allusion to things of that sort, she ceased to take part in the conversation, not only in speech but with the expression on her face. Whether it was in order not to contribute her share to the slanders that were being uttered about some woman or other, or for a quite different reason, the only thing that was noticeable then, upon those so mobile features, was that from the moment in which the topic was broached they had made their inattention evident, while preserving exactly the same expression that they had worn a moment earlier. And this

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

immobility of even a light expression was as heavy as a silence; it would have been impossible to say that she blamed, that she approved, that she knew or did not know about these things. None of her features bore any relation to anything save another feature. Her nose, her mouth, her eyes formed a perfect harmony, isolated from everything else; she looked like a pastel, and seemed to have no more heard what had just been said than if it had been uttered in front of a portrait by Latour.

My serfdom, of which I had already been conscious when, as I gave the driver Brichot's address, I caught sight of the light in her window, had ceased to weigh upon me shortly afterwards, when I saw that Albertine appeared so cruelly conscious of her own. And in order that it might seem to her less burdensome, that she might not decide to break her bonds of her own accord, I had felt that the most effective plan was to give her the impression that it would not be permanent and that I myself was looking forward to its termination. Seeing that my feint had proved successful, I might well have thought myself fortunate, in the first place because what I had so greatly dreaded, Albertine's determination (as I supposed) to leave me, was shewn to be non-existent, and secondly, because, quite apart from the object that I had had in mind, the very success of my feint, by proving that I was something more to Albertine than a scorned lover, whose jealousy is flouted, all of his ruses detected in advance, endowed our love afresh with a sort of virginity, revived for it the days in which she could still, at Balbec, so readily believe that I was in love with another woman. For she would probably not have believed that any longer, but she was taking seriously my feigned de-

THE CAPTIVE

termination to part from her now and for ever. She appeared to suspect that the cause of our parting might be something that had happened at the Verdurins'. Feeling a need to soothe the anxiety into which I was worked by my pretence of a rupture, I said to her: "Albertine, can you swear that you have never lied to me?" She gazed fixedly into the air before replying: "Yes, that is to say no. I ought not to have told you that Andrée was greatly taken with Bloch, we never met him." "Then why did you say so?" "Because I was afraid that you had believed other stories about her, that's all." I told her that I had met a dramatist who was a great friend of Léa, and to whom Léa had told some strange things (I hoped by telling her this to make her suppose that I knew a great deal more than I cared to say about Bloch's cousin's friend. She stared once again into vacancy and then said: "I ought not, when I spoke to you just now about Léa, to have kept from you a three weeks' trip that I took with her once. But I knew you so slightly in those days!" "It was before Balbec?" "Before the second time, yes." And that very morning, she had told me that she did not know Léa, and, only a moment ago, that she had met her once only in her dressing-room! I watched a tongue of flame seize and devour in an instant a romance which I had spent millions of minutes in writing. To what end? To what end? Of course I understood that Albertine had revealed these facts to me because she thought that I had learned them indirectly from Léa; and that there was no reason why a hundred similar facts should not exist. I realised thus that Albertine's utterances, when one interrogated her, did not ever contain an atom of truth, that the truth she allowed

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

to escape only in spite of herself, as though by a sudden combination in her mind of the facts which she had previously been determined to conceal with the belief that I had been informed of them. "But two things are nothing," I said to Albertine, "let us have as many as four, so that you may leave me some memories of you. What other revelations have you got for me?" Once again she stared into vacancy. To what belief in a future life was she adapting her falsehood, with what Gods less unstable than she had supposed was she seeking to ally herself? This cannot have been an easy matter, for her silence and the fixity of her gaze continued for some time. "No, nothing else," she said at length. And, notwithstanding my persistence, she adhered, easily now, to "nothing else." And what a lie! For, from the moment when she had acquired those tastes until the day when she had been shut up in my house, how many times, in how many places, on how many excursions must she have gratified them! The daughters of Gomorrah are at once so rare and so frequent that, in any crowd of people, one does not pass unperceived by the other. From that moment a meeting becomes easy.

I remembered with horror an evening which at the time had struck me as merely absurd. One of my friends had invited me to dine at a restaurant with his mistress and another of his friends who had also brought his own. The two women were not long in coming to an understanding, but were so impatient to enjoy one another that, with the soup, their feet were searching for one another, often finding mine. Presently their legs were interlaced. My two friends noticed nothing; I was on tenterhooks. One of the women, who could contain her-

THE CAPTIVE

self no longer, stooped under the table, saying that she had dropped something. Then one of them complained of a headache and asked to go upstairs to the lavatory. The other discovered that it was time for her to go and meet a woman friend at the theatre. Finally I was left alone with my two friends who suspected nothing. The lady with the headache reappeared, but begged to be allowed to go home by herself to wait for her lover at his house, so that she might take a dose of antipyrin. They became great friends, used to go about together, one of them, dressed as a man, picking up little girls and taking them to the other, initiating them. One of them had a little boy who, she pretended, was troublesome, and handed him over for punishment to her friend, who set to work with a strong arm. One may say that there was no place, however public, in which they did not do what is most secret.

"But Léa behaved perfectly properly with me all the time," Albertine told me. "She was indeed a great deal more reserved than plenty of society women." "Are there any society women who have shewn a want of reserve with you, Albertine?" "Never." "Then what do you mean?" "Oh, well, she was less free in her speech." "For instance?" "She would never, like many of the women you meet, have used the expression 'rotten,' or say: 'I don't care a damn for anybody.'" It seemed to me that a part of the romance which the flames had so far spared was crumbling at length in ashes.

My discouragement might have persisted. Albertine's words, when I thought of them, made it give place to a furious rage. This succumbed to a sort of tender emotion. I also, when I came home and declared that I

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

wished to break with her, had been lying. And this desire for a parting, which I had feigned with perseverance, gradually affected me with some of the misery which I should have felt if I had really wished to part from Albertine.

Besides, even when I thought in fits and starts, in twinges, as we say of other bodily pains, of that orgiastic life which Albertine had led before she met me, I admired all the more the docility of my captive and ceased to feel any resentment.

No doubt, never, during our life together, had I failed to let Albertine know that such a life would in all probability be merely temporary, so that Albertine might continue to find some charm in it. But to-night I had gone farther, having feared that vague threats of separation were no longer sufficient, contradicted as they would doubtless be, in Albertine's mind, by her idea of a strong and jealous love of her, which must have made me, she seemed to imply, go in quest of information to the Verdurins'.

To-night I thought that, among the other reasons which might have made me decide of a sudden, without even realising except as I went on what I was doing, to enact this scene of rupture, there was above all the fact that, when, in one of those impulses to which my father was liable, I threatened another person in his security, as I had not, like him, the courage to carry a threat into practice, in order not to let it be supposed that it had been but empty words, I would go to a considerable length in pretending to carry out my threat and would recoil only when my adversary, having had a genuine illusion of my sincerity, had begun seriously to tremble. Be-

THE CAPTIVE

sides, in these lies, we feel that there is indeed a grain of truth, that, if life does not bring any alteration of our loves, it is ourself who will seek to bring or to feign one, so strongly do we feel that all love, and everything else evolves rapidly towards a farewell. We would like to shed the tears that it will bring long before it comes. No doubt there had been, on this occasion, in the scene that I had enacted, a practical value. I had suddenly determined to keep Albertine because I felt that she was distributed among other people whom I could not prevent her from joining. But had she renounced them all finally for myself, I should have been all the more firmly determined never to let her go, for a parting is, by jealousy, rendered cruel, but, by gratitude, impossible. I felt that in any case I was fighting the decisive battle in which I must conquer or fall. I would have offered Albertine in an hour all that I possessed, because I said to myself: "Everything depends upon this battle, but such battles are less like those of old days which lasted for a few hours than a battle of to-day which does not end on the morrow, nor on the day after, nor in the following week. We give all our strength, because we steadfastly believe that we shall never need any strength again. And more than a year passes without bringing a 'decisive' victory. Perhaps an unconscious reminiscence of lying scenes enacted by M. de Charlus, in whose company I was when the fear of Albertine's leaving me had seized hold of me, was added to the rest. But, later on, I heard my mother say something of which I was then unaware and which leads me to believe that I found all the elements of this scene in myself, in those obscure reserves of heredity which certain emotions, acting in this respect as, upon the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

residue of our stored-up strength, drugs such as alcohol and coffee act, place at our disposal. When my aunt Léonie learned from Eulalie that Françoise, convinced that her mistress would never again leave the house, had secretly planned some outing of which my aunt was to know nothing, she, the day before, would pretend to have made up her mind that she would attempt an excursion on the morrow. The incredulous Françoise was ordered not only to prepare my aunt's clothes beforehand, to give an airing to those that had been put away for too long, but to order a carriage, to arrange, to within a quarter of an hour, all the details of the day. It was only when Françoise, convinced or at any rate shaken, had been forced to confess to my aunt the plan that she herself had formed, that my aunt would publicly abandon her own, so as not, she said, to interfere with Françoise's arrangements. Similarly, so that Albertine might not believe that I was exaggerating and to make her proceed as far as possible in the idea that we were to part, drawing myself the obvious deductions from the proposal that I had advanced, I had begun to anticipate the time which was to begin on the morrow and was to last for ever, the time in which we should be parted, addressing to Albertine the same requests as if we were not to be reconciled almost immediately. Like a general who considers that if a feint is to succeed in deceiving the enemy it must be pushed to extremes, I had employed in this feint almost as much of my store of sensibility as if it had been genuine. This fictitious parting scene ended by causing me almost as much grief as if it had been real, possibly because one of the actors, Albertine, by believing it to be real, had enhanced the other's illusion. While we were

THE CAPTIVE

living, from day to day, in a day which, even if painful, was still endurable, held down to earth by the ballast of habit and by that certainty that the morrow, should it prove a day of torment, would contain the presence of the person who is all in all, here was I stupidly destroying all that oppressive life. I was destroying it, it is true, only in a fictitious fashion, but this was enough to make me wretched; perhaps because the sad words which we utter, even when we are lying, carry in themselves their sorrow and inject it deeply into us; perhaps because we do not realise that, by feigning farewells, we evoke by anticipation an hour which must inevitably come later on; then we cannot be certain that we have not released the mechanism which will make it strike. In every bluff there is an element, however small, of uncertainty as to what the person whom we are deceiving is going to do. If this make-believe of parting should lead to a parting! We cannot consider the possibility, however unlikely it may seem, without a clutching of the heart. We are doubly anxious, because the parting would then occur at the moment when it would be intolerable, when we had been made to suffer by the woman who would be leaving us before she had healed, or at least appeased us. In short, we have no longer the solid ground of habit upon which we rest, even in our sorrow. We have deliberately deprived ourself of it, we have given the present day an exceptional importance, have detached it from the days before and after it; it floats without roots like a day of departure; our imagination ceasing to be paralysed by habit has awakened, we have suddenly added to our everyday love sentimental dreams which enormously enhance it, make indispensable to us a presence upon which,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

as a matter of fact, we are no longer certain that we can rely. No doubt it is precisely in order to assure ourselves of that presence for the future that we have indulged in the make-believe of being able to dispense with it. But this make-believe, we have ourselves been taken in by it, we have begun to suffer afresh because we have created something new, unfamiliar which thus resembles those cures that are destined in time to heal the malady from which we are suffering, but the first effects of which are to aggravate it.

I had tears in my eyes, like the people who, alone in their bedrooms, imagining, in the wayward course of their meditations, the death of some one whom they love, form so detailed a picture of the grief that they would feel that they end by feeling it. And so as I multiplied my advice to Albertine as to the way in which she would have to behave in relation to myself after we had parted, I seemed to be feeling almost as keen a distress as though we had not been on the verge of a reconciliation. Besides, was I so certain that I could bring about this reconciliation, bring Albertine back to the idea of a life shared with myself, and, if I succeeded for the time being, that in her, the state of mind which this scene had dispelled would not revive? I felt myself, but did not believe myself to be master of the future, because I realised that this sensation was due merely to the fact that the future did not yet exist, and that thus I was not crushed by its inevitability. In short, while I lied, I was perhaps putting into my words more truth than I supposed. I had just had an example of this, when I told Albertine that I should quickly forget her; this was what had indeed happened to me in the case of Gilberte, whom I

THE CAPTIVE

now refrained from going to see in order to escape not a grief but an irksome duty. And certainly I had been grieved when I wrote to Gilberte that I would not come any more, and I had gone to see her only occasionally. Whereas the whole of Albertine's time belonged to me, and in love it is easier to relinquish a sentiment than to lose a habit. But all these painful words about our parting, if the strength to utter them had been given me because I knew them to be untrue, were on the other hand sincere upon Albertine's lips when I heard her exclaim: "Ah! I promise, I will never see you again. Anything sooner than see you cry like that, my darling. I do not wish to cause you any grief. Since it must be, we will never meet again." They were sincere, as they could not have been coming from me, because, for one thing, as Albertine felt nothing stronger for me than friendship, the renunciation that they promised cost her less; because, moreover, in a scene of parting, it is the person who is not genuinely in love that makes the tender speeches, since love does not express itself directly; because, lastly, my tears, which would have been so small a matter in a great love, seemed to her almost extraordinary and overwhelmed her, transposed into the region of that state of friendship in which she dwelt, a friendship greater than mine for her, to judge by what she had just said, which was perhaps not altogether inexact, for the thousand kindnesses of love may end by arousing, in the person who inspires without feeling it, an affection, a gratitude less selfish than the sentiment that provoked them, which, perhaps, after years of separation, when nothing of that sentiment remains in the former lover, will still persist in the beloved.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

"My little Albertine," I replied, "it is very good of you to make me this promise. Anyhow, for the first few years at least, I shall avoid the places where I might meet you. You don't know whether you will be going to Balbec this year? Because in that case I should arrange not to go there myself." But now, if I continued to progress thus, anticipating time to come in my lying inventions, it was with a view no less to inspiring fear in Albertine than to making myself wretched. As a man who at first had no serious reason for losing his temper, becomes completely intoxicated by the sound of his own voice, and lets himself be carried away by a fury engendered not by his grievance but by his anger which itself is steadily growing, so I was falling ever faster and faster down the slope of my wretchedness, towards an ever more profound despair, and with the inertia of a man who feels the cold grip him, makes no effort to resist it and even finds a sort of pleasure in shivering. And if I had now at length, as I fully supposed, the strength to control myself, to react and to reverse my engines, far more than from the grief which Albertine had caused me by so unfriendly a greeting on my return, it was from that which I had felt in imagining, so as to pretend to be outlining them, the formalities of an imaginary separation, in foreseeing its consequences, that Albertine's kiss, when the time came for her to bid me good night, would have to console me now. In any case, it must not be she that said this good night of her own accord, for that would have made more difficult the revulsion by which I would propose to her to abandon the idea of our parting. And so I continued to remind her that the time to say good night had long since come and gone, a method which, by

THE CAPTIVE

leaving the initiative to me, enabled me to put it off for a moment longer. And thus I scattered with allusions to the lateness of the hour, to our exhaustion, the questions with which I was plying Albertine. "I don't know where I shall be going," she replied to the last of these, in a worried tone. "Perhaps I shall go to Touraine, to my aunt's." And this first plan that she suggested froze me as though it were beginning to make definitely effective our final separation. She looked round the room, at the pianola, the blue satin armchairs. "I still cannot make myself realise that I shall not see all this again, to-morrow, or the next day, or ever. Poor little room. It seems to me quite impossible; I cannot get it into my head." "It had to be; you were unhappy here." "No, indeed, I was not unhappy, it is now that I shall be unhappy." "No, I assure you, it is better for you." "For you, perhaps!" I began to stare fixedly into vacancy, as though, worried by an extreme hesitation, I was debating an idea which had occurred to my mind. Then, all of a sudden: "Listen, Albertine, you say that you are happier here, that you are going to be unhappy." "Why, of course." "That appals me; would you like us to try to carry on for a few weeks? Who knows, week by week, we may perhaps go on for a long time; you know that there are temporary arrangements which end by becoming permanent." "Oh, how kind you are!" "Only in that case it is ridiculous of us to have made ourselves wretched like this over nothing for hours on end, it is like making all the preparations for a long journey and then staying at home. I am shattered with grief." I made her sit on my knee, I took Bergotte's manuscript which she so longed to have and wrote on the cover: "To my little

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Albertine, in memory of a new lease of life." "Now," I said to her, "go and sleep until to-morrow, my darling, for you must be worn out." "I am very glad, all the same." "Do you love me a little bit?" "A hundred times more than ever."

I should have been wrong in being delighted with this little piece of play-acting, had it not been that I had carried it to the pitch of a real scene on the stage. Had we done no more than quite simply discuss a separation, even that would have been a serious matter. In conversations of this sort, we suppose that we are speaking not merely without sincerity; which is true, but freely. Whereas they are generally, though we know it not, murmured in spite of us; the first murmur of a storm which we do not suspect. In reality, what we express at such times is the opposite of our desire (which is to live for ever with her whom we love), but there is also that impossibility of living together which is the cause of our daily suffering, a suffering preferred by us to that of a parting, which will, however, end, in spite of ourselves, in parting us. Generally speaking, not, however, at once. As a rule, it happens—this was not, as we shall see, my case with Albertine—that, some time after the words in which we did not believe, we put into action a vague attempt at a deliberate separation, not painful, temporary. We ask the woman, so that afterwards she may be happier in our company, so that we on the other hand may momentarily escape from continual worries and fatigues, to go without us, or to let us go without her, for a few days elsewhere, the first days that we have—for a long time past—spent, as would have seemed to us impossible, away from her. Very soon she returns to

THE CAPTIVE

take her place by our fireside. Only this separation, short, but made real, is not so arbitrarily decided upon, not so certainly the only one that we have in mind. The same sorrows begin afresh, the same difficulty in living together becomes accentuated, only a parting is no longer so difficult as before; we have begun mentioning it, and have then put it into practice in a friendly fashion. But these are only preliminary ventures whose nature we have not recognised. Presently, to the momentary and smiling separation will succeed the terrible and final separation for which we have, without knowing it, paved the way.

“Come to my room in five minutes and let me see something of you, my dearest boy. You are full of kindness. But afterwards I shall fall asleep at once, for I am almost dead.” It was indeed a dead woman that I beheld when, presently, I entered her room. She had gone to sleep immediately she lay down, the sheets wrapped like a shroud about her body had assumed, with their stately folds, a stony rigidity. One would have said that, as in certain Last Judgments of the Middle Ages, her head alone was emerging from the tomb, awaiting in its sleep the Archangel’s trumpet. This head had been surprised by sleep almost flung back, its hair bristling. And as I saw the expressionless body extended there, I asked myself what logarithmic table it constituted so that all the actions in which it might have been involved, from the nudge of an elbow to the brushing of a skirt, were able to cause me, stretched out to the infinity of all the points that it had occupied in space and time, and from time to time sharply reawakened in my memory, so intense an anguish, albeit I knew those actions to have

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

been determined in her by impulses, desires, which in another person, in herself five years earlier, or five years later, would have left me quite indifferent. All this was a lie, but a lie for which I had not the courage to seek any solution other than my own death. And so I remained, in the fur coat which I had not taken off since my return from the Verdurins', before that bent body, that figure allegorical of what? Of my death? Of my love? Presently I began to hear her regular breathing. I went and sat down on the edge of her bed to take that soothing cure of fresh air and contemplation. Then I withdrew very gently so as not to awaken her.

It was so late that, in the morning, I warned Françoise to tread very softly when she had to pass by the door of Albertine's room. And so Françoise, convinced that we had spent the night in what she used to call orgies, ironically warned the other servants not to "wake the Princess." And this was one of the things that I dreaded, that Françoise might one day be unable to contain herself any longer, might treat Albertine with insolence, and that this might introduce complications into our life. Françoise was now no longer, as at the time when it distressed her to see Eulalie treated generously by my aunt, of an age to endure her jealousy with courage. It distorted, paralysed our old servant's face to such an extent that at times I asked myself whether she had not, after some outburst of rage, had a slight stroke. Having thus asked that Albertine's sleep should be respected, I was unable to sleep myself. I endeavoured to understand the true state of Albertine's mind. By that wretched farce which I had played, was it a real peril that I had averted, and, notwithstanding her assurance that she was so happy

THE CAPTIVE

living with me, had she really felt at certain moments a longing for freedom, or on the contrary was I to believe what she said?

Which of these two hypotheses was the truth? If it often befell me, if it was in a special case to befall me that I must extend an incident in my past life to the dimensions of history, when I made an attempt to understand some political event; inversely, this morning, I did not cease to identify, in spite of all the differences and in an attempt to understand its bearing, our scene overnight with a diplomatic incident that had just occurred. I had perhaps the right to reason thus. For it was highly probable that, without my knowledge, the example of M. de Charlus had guided me in that lying scene which I had so often seen him enact with such authority; on the other hand, was it in him anything else than an unconscious importation into the domain of his private life of the innate tendency of his Germanic stock, provocative from guile and, from pride, belligerent at need. Certain persons, among them the Prince of Monaco, having suggested the idea to the French Government that, if it did not dispense with M. Delcassé, a menacing Germany would indeed declare war, the Minister for Foreign Affairs had been asked to resign. So that the French Government had admitted the hypothesis of an intention to make war upon us if we did not yield. But others thought that it was all a mere "bluff" and that if France had stood firm Germany would not have drawn the sword. No doubt the scenario was not merely different but almost opposite, since the threat of a rupture had not been put forward by Albertine; but a series of impressions had led me to believe that she was thinking of it,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

as France had been led to believe about Germany. On the other hand, if Germany desired peace, to have provoked in the French Government the idea that she was anxious for war was a disputable and dangerous trick. Certainly, my conduct had been skilful enough, if it was the thought that I would never make up my mind to break with her that provoked in Albertine sudden longings for independence. And was it not difficult to believe that she did not feel them, to shut one's eyes to a whole secret existence, directed towards the satisfaction of her vice, simply on remarking the anger with which she had learned that I had gone to see the Verdurins, when she exclaimed: "I thought as much," and went on to reveal everything by saying: "Wasn't Mlle. Vinteuil there?" All this was corroborated by Albertine's meeting with Mme. Verdurin of which Andrée had informed me. But perhaps all the same these sudden longings for independence (I told myself, when I tried to go against my own instinct) were caused—supposing them to exist—or would eventually be caused by the opposite theory, to wit that I had never had any intention of marrying her, that it was when I made, as though involuntarily, an allusion to our approaching separation that I was telling the truth, that I would whatever happened part from her one day or another, a belief which the scene that I had made overnight could then only have confirmed and which might end by engendering in her the resolution: "If this is bound to happen one day or another, better to end everything at once." The preparations for war which the most misleading of proverbs lays down as the best way to secure the triumph of peace, create first of all the belief in each of the adversaries that the other desires a rupture,

THE CAPTIVE

a belief which brings the rupture about, and, when it has occurred, this further belief in each of them that it is the other that has sought it. Even if the threat was not sincere, its success encourages a repetition. But the exact point to which a bluff may succeed is difficult to determine; if one party goes too far, the other which has previously yielded, advances in its turn; the first party, no longer able to change its method, accustomed to the idea that to seem not to fear a rupture is the best way of avoiding one (which is what I had done overnight with Albertine), and moreover driven to prefer, in its pride, to fall rather than yield, perseveres in its threat until the moment when neither can draw back any longer. The bluff may also be blended with sincerity, may alternate with it, and it is possible that what was a game yesterday may become a reality to-morrow. Finally it may also happen that one of the adversaries is really determined upon war, it might be that Albertine, for instance, had the intention of, sooner or later, not continuing this life any longer, or on the contrary that the idea had never even entered her mind and that my imagination had invented the whole thing from start to finish. Such were the different hypotheses which I considered while she lay asleep that morning. And yet as to the last I can say that I never, in the period that followed, threatened Albertine with a rupture unless in response to an idea of an evil freedom on her part, an idea which she did not express to me, but which seemed to me to be implied by certain mysterious dissatisfactions, certain words, certain gestures, of which that idea was the only possible explanation and of which she refused to give me any other. Even then, quite often, I remarked them without making any

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

allusion to a possible separation, hoping that they were due to a fit of ill temper which would end that same day. But it continued at times without intermission for weeks on end, during which Albertine seemed anxious to provoke a conflict, as though there had been at the time, in some region more or less remote, pleasures of which she knew, of which her seclusion in my house was depriving her, and which would continue to influence her until they came to an end, like those atmospheric changes which, even by our own fireside, affect our nerves, even when they are occurring as far away as the Balearic islands.

This morning, while Albertine lay asleep and I was trying to guess what was concealed in her, I received a letter from my mother in which she expressed her anxiety at having heard nothing of what we had decided in this phrase of Mme. de Sévigné: "In my own mind I am convinced that he will not marry; but then, why trouble this girl whom he will never marry? Why risk making her refuse suitors at whom she will never look again save with scorn? Why disturb the mind of a person whom it would be so easy to avoid?" This letter from my mother brought me back to earth. "What am I doing, seeking a mysterious soul, interpreting a face and feeling myself overawed by presentiments which I dare not explore?" I asked myself. "I have been dreaming, the matter is quite simple. I am an undecided young man, and it is a question of one of those marriages as to which it takes time to find out whether they will happen or not. There is nothing in this peculiar to Albertine." This thought gave me an immense but a short relief. Very soon I said to myself: "One can after all reduce everything, if one regards it in its social aspect, to the most commonplace

THE CAPTIVE

item of newspaper gossip. From outside, it is perhaps thus that I should look at it. But I know well that what is true, what at least is also true, is everything that I have thought, is what I have read in Albertine's eyes, is the fears that torment me, is the problem that I incessantly set myself with regard to Albertine. The story of the hesitating bridegroom and the broken engagement may correspond to this, as the report of a theatrical performance made by an intelligent reporter may give us the subject of one of Ibsen's plays. But there is something beyond those facts which are reported. It is true that this other thing exists perhaps, were we able to discern it, in all hesitating bridegrooms and in all the engagements that drag on, because there is perhaps an element of mystery in our everyday life." It was possible for me to neglect it in the lives of other people, but Albertine's life and my own I was living from within.

Albertine no more said to me after this midnight scene than she had said before it: "I know that you do not trust me, I am going to try to dispel your suspicions." But this idea, which she never expressed in words, might have served as an explanation of even her most trivial actions. Not only did she take care never to be alone for a moment, so that I might not lack information as to what she had been doing, if I did not believe her own statements, but even when she had to telephone to Andrée, or to the garage, or to the livery stable or elsewhere, she pretended that it was such a bore to stand about by herself waiting to telephone, what with the time the girls took to give you your number, and took care that I should be with her at such times, or, failing myself, Françoise, as though she were afraid that I might imagine

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

reprehensible conversations by telephone in which she would make mysterious assignations. Alas, all this did not set my mind at rest. I had a day of discouragement. Aimé had sent me back Esther's photograph, with a message that she was not the person. And so Albertine had other intimate friends as well as this girl to whom, through her misunderstanding of what I said, I had, when I meant to refer to something quite different, discovered that she had given her photograph. I sent this photograph back to Bloch. What I should have liked to see was the photograph that Albertine had given to Esther. How was she dressed in it? Perhaps with a bare bosom, for all I knew. But I dared not mention it to Albertine (for it would then have appeared that I had not seen the photograph), or to Bloch, since I did not wish him to think that I was interested in Albertine. And this life, which anyone who knew of my suspicions and her bondage would have seen to be agonising to myself and to Albertine, was regarded from without, by Françoise, as a life of unmerited pleasures of which full advantage was cunningly taken by that "trickstress" and (as Françoise said, using the feminine form far more often than the masculine, for she was more envious of women) "charlatante." Indeed, as Françoise, by contact with myself, had enriched her vocabulary with fresh terms, but had adapted them to her own style, she said of Albertine that she had never known a person of such "perfidity," who was so skilful at "drawing my money" by play-acting (which Françoise, who was as prone to mistake the particular for the general as the general for the particular and who had but a very vague idea of the various kinds of dramatic art, called "acting a pantomime").

THE CAPTIVE

Perhaps for this error as to the true nature of the life led by Albertine and myself, I was myself to some extent responsible owing to the vague confirmations of it which, when I was talking to Françoise, I skilfully let fall, from a desire either to tease her or to appear, if not loved, at any rate happy. And yet my jealousy, the watch that I kept over Albertine, which I would have given anything for Françoise not to suspect, she was not long in discovering, guided, like the thought-reader who, groping blindfold, finds the hidden object, by that intuition which she possessed for anything that might be painful to me, which would not allow itself to be turned aside by the lies that I might tell in the hope of distracting her, and also by that clairvoyant hatred which urged her—even more than it urged her to believe her enemies more prosperous, more skilful hypocrites than they really were—to discover the secret that might prove their undoing and to precipitate their downfall. Françoise certainly never made any scenes with Albertine. But I was acquainted with Françoise's art of insinuation, the advantage that she knew how to derive from a significant setting, and I cannot believe that she resisted the temptation to let Albertine know, day by day, what a degraded part she was playing in the household, to madden her by a description, cunningly exaggerated, of the confinement to which my mistress was subjected. On one occasion I found Françoise, armed with a huge pair of spectacles, rummaging through my papers and replacing among them a sheet on which I had jotted down a story about Swann and his utter inability to do without Odette. Had she maliciously left it lying in Albertine's room? Besides, above all Françoise's innuendoes which had merely been, in the

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

bass, the muttering and perfidious orchestration, it is probable that there must have risen, higher, clearer, more pressing, the accusing and calumnious voice of the Verdurins, annoyed to see that Albertine was involuntarily keeping me and that I was voluntarily keeping her away from the little clan. As for the money that I was spending upon Albertine, it was almost impossible for me to conceal it from Françoise, since I was unable to conceal any of my expenditure from her. Françoise had few faults, but those faults had created in her, for their service, positive talents which she often lacked apart from the exercise of those faults. Her chief fault was her curiosity as to all money spent by us upon people other than herself. If I had a bill to pay, a gratuity to give, it was useless my going into a corner, she would find a plate to be put in the right place, a napkin to be picked up, which would give her an excuse for approaching. And however short a time I allowed her, before dismissing her with fury, this woman who had almost lost her sight, who could barely add up a column of figures, guided by the same expert sense which makes a tailor, on catching sight of you, instinctively calculate the price of the stuff of which your coat is made, while he cannot resist fingering it, or makes a painter responsive to a colour effect, Françoise saw by stealth, calculated instantaneously the amount that I was giving. And when, so that she might not tell Albertine that I was corrupting her chauffeur, I took the initiative and, apologising for the tip, said: "I wanted to be generous to the chauffeur, I gave him ten francs"; Françoise, pitiless, to whom a glance, that of an old and almost blind eagle, had been sufficient, replied: "No indeed, Monsieur gave him a tip of 43 francs. He

THE CAPTIVE

told Monsieur that the charge was 45 francs, Monsieur gave him 100 francs, and he handed back only 12 francs." She had had time to see and to reckon the amount of the gratuity which I myself did not know. I asked myself whether Albertine, feeling herself watched, would not herself put into effect that separation with which I had threatened her, for life in its changing course makes realities of our fables. Whenever I heard a door open, I felt myself shudder as my grandmother used to shudder in her last moments whenever I rang my bell. I did not believe that she would leave the house without telling me, but it was my unconscious self that thought so, as it was my grandmother's unconscious self that throbbed at the sound of the bell, when she was no longer conscious. One morning indeed, I felt a sudden misgiving that she not only had left the house but had gone for good: I had just heard the sound of a door which seemed to me to be that of her room. On tiptoe I crept towards the room, opened the door, stood upon the threshold. In the dim light the bedclothes bulged in a semi-circle, that must be Albertine who, with her body bent, was sleeping with her feet and face to the wall. Only, overflowing the bed, the hair upon that head, abundant and dark, made me realise that it was she, that she had not opened her door, had not stirred, and I felt that this motionless and living semi-circle, in which a whole human life was contained and which was the only thing to which I attached any value, I felt that it was there, in my despotic possession.

If Albertine's object was to restore my peace of mind, she was partly successful; my reason moreover asked nothing better than to prove to me that I had been mistaken as to her crafty plans, as I had perhaps been mis-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

taken as to her vicious instincts. No doubt I added to the value of the arguments with which my reason furnished me my own desire to find them sound. But, if I was to be fair and to have a chance of perceiving the truth, unless we admit that it is never known save by presentiment, by a telepathic emanation, must I not say to myself that if my reason, in seeking to bring about my recovery, let itself be guided by my desire, on the other hand, so far as concerned Mlle. Vinteuil, Albertine's vices, her intention to lead a different life, her plan of separation, which were the corollaries of her vices, my instinct had been capable, in the attempt to make me ill, of being led astray by my jealousy. Besides, her seclusion, which Albertine herself contrived so ingeniously to render absolute, by removing my suffering, removed by degrees my suspicion and I could begin again, when the night brought back my uneasiness, to find in Albertine's presence the consolation of earlier days. Seated beside my bed, she spoke to me of one of those dresses or one of those presents which I never ceased to give her in the effort to enhance the comfort of her life and the beauty of her prison. Albertine had at first thought only of dresses and furniture. Now silver had begun to interest her. And so I had questioned M. de Charlus about old French silver, and had done so because, when we had been planning to have a yacht—a plan which Albertine decided was impracticable, as I did also whenever I had begun to believe in her virtue, with the result that my jealousy, as it declined, no longer held in check other desires in which she had no place and which also needed money for their satisfaction—we had, to be on the safe side, not that she supposed that we should ever have a yacht, asked Elstir

THE CAPTIVE

for his advice. Now, just as in matters of women's dress, the painter was a refined and sensitive critic of the furnishing of yachts. He would allow only English furniture and old silver. This had led Albertine, since our return from Balbec, to read books upon the silversmith's art, upon the handiwork of the old chasers. But as our old silver was melted twice over, at the time of the Treaty of Utrecht when the King himself, setting the example to his great nobles, sacrificed his plate, and again in 1789, it is now extremely rare. On the other hand, it is true that modern silversmiths have managed to copy all this old plate from the drawings of Le Pont-aux-Choux, Elstir considered this modern antique unworthy to enter the home of a woman of taste, even a floating home. I knew that Albertine had read the description of the marvels that Roelliers had made for Mme. du Barry. If any of these pieces remained, she was dying to see them, and I to give them to her. She had even begun to form a neat collection which she installed with charming taste in a glass case and at which I could not look without emotion and alarm, for the art with which she arranged them was that born of patience, ingenuity, home-sickness, the need to forget, in which prisoners excel. In the matter of dress, what appealed to her most at this time was everything that was made by Fortuny. These Fortuny gowns, one of which I had seen Mme. de Guermantes wearing, were those of which Elstir, when he told us about the magnificent garments of the women of Carpaccio's and Titian's day, had prophesied the speedy return, rising from their ashes, sumptuous, for everything must return in time, as it is written beneath the vaults of Saint Mark's, and proclaimed, where they drink from the urns of marble

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

and jasper of the byzantine capitals, by the birds which symbolise at once death and resurrection. As soon as women had begun to wear them, Albertine had remembered Elstir's prophecy, she had desired to have one and we were to go and choose it. Now these gowns, even if they were not those genuine antiques in which women to-day seem a little too much "in fancy dress" and which it is preferable to keep as pieces in a collection (I was in search of these also, as it happens, for Albertine), could not be said to have the chilling effect of the artificial, the sham antique. Like the theatrical designs of Sert, Bakst and Benoist who at that moment were recreating in the Russian ballet the most cherished periods of art—with the aid of works of art impregnated with their spirit and yet original—these Fortuny gowns, faithfully antique but markedly original, brought before the eye like a stage setting, with an even greater suggestiveness than a setting, since the setting was left to the imagination, that Venice loaded with the gorgeous East from which they had been taken, of which they were, even more than a relic in the shrine of Saint Mark suggesting the sun and a group of turbaned heads, the fragmentary, mysterious and complementary colour. Everything of those days had perished, but everything was born again, evoked to fill the space between them with the splendour of the scene and the hum of life, by the reappearance, detailed and surviving, of the fabrics worn by the Doges' ladies. I had tried once or twice to obtain advice upon this subject from Mme. de Guermantes. But the Duchess cared little for garments which form a "costume". She herself, though she possessed several, never looked so well as in black velvet with diamonds. And with regard to

THE CAPTIVE

gowns like Fortuny's, her advice was not of any great value. Besides, I felt a scruple, if I asked for it, lest she might think that I called upon her only when I happened to need her help, whereas for a long time past I had been declining several invitations from her weekly. It was not only from her, moreover, that I received them in such profusion. Certainly, she and many other women had always been extremely kind to me. But my seclusion had undoubtedly multiplied their hospitality tenfold. It seems that in our social life, a minor echo of what occurs in love, the best way for a man to make himself sought-after is to withhold himself. A man calculates everything that he can possibly cite to his credit, in order to find favour with a woman, changes his clothes all day long, pays attention to his appearance, she does not pay him a single one of the attentions which he receives from the other woman to whom, while he betrays her, and in spite of his appearing before her ill-dressed and without any artifice to attract, he has endeared himself for ever. Similarly, if a man were to regret that he was not sufficiently courted in society, I should not advise him to pay more calls, to keep an even finer carriage, I should tell him not to accept any invitation, to live shut up in his room, to admit nobody, and that then there would be a queue outside his door. Or rather I should not tell him so. For it is a certain road to success which succeeds only like the road to love, that is to say if one has not adopted it with that object in view, if, for instance, you confine yourself to your room because you are seriously ill, or are supposed to be, or are keeping a mistress shut up with you whom you prefer to society (or for all these reasons at once), this will justify another person, who is not aware

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

of the woman's existence, and simply because you decline to see him, in preferring you to all the people who offer themselves, and attaching himself to you.

"We shall have to begin to think soon about your Fortuny gowns," I said to Albertine one evening. Surely, to her who had long desired them, who chose them deliberately with me, who had a place reserved for them beforehand not only in her wardrobe but in her imagination, the possession of these gowns, every detail of which, before deciding among so many, she carefully examined, was something more than it would have been to an over-wealthy woman who has more dresses than she knows what to do with and never even looks at them. And yet, notwithstanding the smile with which Albertine thanked me, saying: "You are too kind," I noticed how weary, and even wretched, she was looking.

While we waited for these gowns to be ready, I used to borrow others of the kind, sometimes indeed merely the stuffs, and would dress Albertine in them, drape them over her; she walked about my room with the majesty of a Doge's wife and the grace of a mannequin. Only my captivity in Paris was made more burdensome by the sight of these garments which suggested Venice. True, Albertine was far more of a prisoner than I. And it was curious to remark how, through the walls of her prison, destiny, which transforms people, had contrived to pass, to change her in her very essence, and turn the girl I had known at Balbec into a tedious and docile captive. Yes, the walls of her prison had not prevented that influence from reaching her; perhaps indeed it was they that had produced it. It was no longer the same Albertine, because she was not, as at Balbec, incessantly in flight upon her bicycle, never

THE CAPTIVE

to be found owing to the number of little watering-places where she would go to spend the night with her girl friends and where moreover her untruths made it more difficult to lay hands upon her; because confined to my house, docile and alone, she was no longer even what at Balbec, when I had succeeded in finding her, she used to be upon the beach, that fugitive, cautious, cunning creature, whose presence was enlarged by the thought of all those assignations which she was skilled in concealing, which made one love her because they made one suffer, in whom, beneath her coldness to other people and her casual answers, one could feel yesterday's assignation and to-morrow's, and for myself a contemptuous, deceitful thought; because the sea breeze no longer buffeted her skirts, because, above all, I had clipped her wings, she had ceased to be a Victory, was a burdensome slave of whom I would fain have been rid.

Then, to change the course of my thoughts, rather than begin a game of cards or draughts with Albertine, I asked her to give me a little music. I remained in bed, and she went and sat down at the end of the room before the pianola, between the two bookcases. She chose pieces which were quite new or which she had played to me only once or twice, for, as she began to know me better, she had learned that I liked to fix my thoughts only upon what was still obscure to me, glad to be able, in the course of these successive renderings, to join together, thanks to the increasing but, alas, distorting and alien light of my intellect, the fragmentary and interrupted lines of the structure which at first had been almost hidden in the mist. She knew and, I think, understood, the joy that my mind derived, at these first hearings, from this task

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

of modelling a still shapeless nebula. She guessed that at the third or four repetition my intellect, having reached, having consequently placed at the same distance, all the parts, and having no longer any activity to spare for them, had reciprocally extended and arrested them upon a uniform plane. She did not, however, proceed at once to a fresh piece, for, without perhaps having any clear idea of the process that was going on in my mind, she knew that at the moment when the effort of my intellect had succeeded in dispelling the mystery of a work, it was very rarely that, in compensation, it did not, in the course of its task of destruction, pick up some profitable reflexion. And when in time Albertine said: "We might give this roll to Françoise and get her to change it for something else," often there was for me a piece of music less in the world, perhaps, but a truth the more. While she was playing, of all Albertine's multiple tresses I could see but a single loop of black hair in the shape of a heart trained at the side of her ear like the riband of a Velasquez Infanta. Just as the substance of that Angel musician was constituted by the multiple journeys between the different points in past time which the memory of her occupied in myself, and its different abodes, from my vision to the most inward sensations of my being, which helped me to descend into the intimacy of hers, so the music that she played had also a volume, produced by the inconstant visibility of the different phrases, accordingly as I had more or less succeeded in throwing a light upon them and in joining together the lines of a structure which at first had seemed to me to be almost completely hidden in the fog.

I was so far convinced that it was absurd to be jealous

THE CAPTIVE

of Mlle. Vinteuil and her friend, inasmuch as Albertine since her confession had made no attempt to see them and among all the plans for a holiday in the country which we had formed had herself rejected Combray, so near to Montjouvain, that, often, what I would ask Albertine to play to me, without its causing me any pain, would be some music by Vinteuil. Once only this music had been an indirect cause of my jealousy. This was when Albertine, who knew that I had heard it performed at Mme. Verdurin's by Morel, spoke to me one evening about him, expressing a keen desire to go and hear him play and to make his acquaintance. This, as it happened, was shortly after I had learned of the letter, unintentionally intercepted by M. de Charlus, from Léa to Morel. I asked myself whether Léa might not have mentioned him to Albertine. The words: "You bad woman, you naughty old girl" came to my horrified mind. But precisely because Vinteuil's music was in this way painfully associated with Léa—and no longer with Mlle. Vinteuil and her friend—when the grief that Léa caused me was soothed, I could then listen to this music without pain; one malady had made me immune to any possibility of the others. In this music of Vinteuil, phrases that I had not noticed at Mme. Verdurin's, obscure phantoms that were then indistinct, turned into dazzling architectural structures; and some of them became friends, whom I had barely made out at first, who at best had appeared to me to be ugly, so that I could never have supposed that they were like those people, unattractive at first sight, whom we discover to be what they really are only after we have come to know them well. From one state to the other was a positive transmutation. On the other hand,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

phrases that I had distinguished at once in the music that I had heard at Mme. Verdurin's, but had not then recognised, I identified now with phrases from other works, such as that phrase from the Sacred Variation for the Organ which, at Mme. Verdurin's, had passed unperceived by me in the septet, where nevertheless, a saint that had stepped down from the sanctuary, it found itself consorting with the composer's familiar fays. Finally, the phrase that had seemed to me too little melodious, too mechanical in its rhythm, of the swinging joy of bells at noon, had now become my favourite, whether because I had grown accustomed to its ugliness or because I had discovered its beauty. This reaction from the disappointment which great works of art cause at first may in fact be attributed to a weakening of the initial impression or to the effort necessary to lay bare the truth. Two hypotheses which suggest themselves in all important questions, questions of the truth of Art, of the truth of the Immortality of the Soul; we must choose between them; and, in the case of Vinteuil's music, this choice presented itself at every moment under a variety of forms. For instance, this music seemed to me to be something truer than all the books that I knew. Sometimes I thought that this was due to the fact that what we feel in life, not being felt in the form of ideas, its literary (that is to say an intellectual) translation in giving an account of it, explains it, analyses it, but does not recompose it as does music, in which the sounds seem to assume the inflexion of the thing itself, to reproduce that interior and extreme point of our sensation which is the part that gives us that peculiar exhilaration which we recapture from time to time and which when we say: "What a fine

THE CAPTIVE

day! What glorious sunshine!" we do not in the least communicate to our neighbour, in whom the same sun and the same weather arouse wholly different vibrations. In Vinteuil's music, there were thus some of those visions which it is impossible to express and almost forbidden to record, since, when at the moment of falling asleep we receive the caress of their unreal enchantment, at that very moment in which reason has already deserted us, our eyes are already sealed, and before we have had time to know not merely the ineffable but the invisible, we are asleep. It seemed to me indeed when I abandoned myself to this hypothesis that art might be real, that it was something even more than the simply nervous joy of a fine day or an opiate night that music can give; a more real, more fruitful exhilaration, to judge at least by what I felt. It is not possible that a piece of sculpture, a piece of music which gives us an emotion which we feel to be more exalted, more pure, more true, does not correspond to some definite spiritual reality. It is surely symbolical of one, since it gives that impression of profundity and truth. Thus nothing resembled more closely than some such phrase of Vinteuil the peculiar pleasure which I had felt at certain moments in my life, when gazing, for instance, at the steeples of Martinville, or at certain trees along a road near Balbec, or, more simply, in the first part of this book, when I tasted a certain cup of tea.

Without pressing this comparison farther, I felt that the clear sounds, the blazing colours which Vinteuil sent to us from the world in which he composed, paraded before my imagination with insistence but too rapidly for me to be able to apprehend it, something which I might compare to the perfumed silkiness of a geranium. Only,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

whereas, in memory, this vagueness may be, if not explored, at any rate fixed precisely, thanks to a guiding line of circumstances which explain why a certain savour has been able to recall to us luminous sensations, the vague sensations given by Vinteuil coming not from a memory but from an impression (like that of the steeples of Martinville), one would have had to find, for the geranium scent of his music, not a material explanation, but the profound equivalent, the unknown and highly coloured festival (of which his works seemed to be the scattered fragments, the scarlet-flashing rifts), the mode in which he "heard" the universe and projected it far beyond himself. This unknown quality of a unique world which no other composer had ever made us see, perhaps it is in this, I said to Albertine, that the most authentic proof of genius consists, even more than in the content of the work itself. "Even in literature?" Albertine inquired. "Even in literature." And thinking again of the monotony of Vinteuil's works, I explained to Albertine that the great men of letters have never created more than a single work, or rather have never done more than refract through various mediums an identical beauty which they bring into the world. "If it were not so late, my child," I said to her, "I would shew you this quality in all the writers whose works you read while I am asleep, I would shew you the same identity as in Vinteuil. These typical phrases, which you are beginning to recognise as I do, my little Albertine, the same in the sonata, in the septet, in the other works, would be for instance, if you like, in Barbey d'Aurevilly, a hidden reality revealed by a material trace, the physiological blush of *l'Ensorcelée*, of *Aimée de Spens*, of *la*

THE CAPTIVE

Clotte, the hand of the *Rideau Cramoisi*, the old manners and customs, the old words, the ancient and peculiar trades behind which there is the Past, the oral history compiled by the rustics of the manor, the noble Norman cities redolent of England and charming as a Scots village, the cause of curses against which one can do nothing, the Vellini, the Shepherd, a similar sensation of anxiety in a passage, whether it be the wife seeking her husband in *Une Vieille Maîtresse*, or the husband in *l'Ensorcelée* scouring the plain and the 'Ensorcelée' herself coming out from Mass. There are other typical phrases in Vinteuil like that stonemason's geometry in the novels of Thomas Hardy."

Vinteuil's phrases made me think of the "little phrase" and I told Albertine that it had been so to speak the national anthem of the love of Swann and Odette, "the parents of Gilberte whom you know. You told me that she was not a bad girl. But didn't she attempt to have relations with you? She has mentioned you to me." "Yes, you see, her parents used to send a carriage to fetch her from our lessons when the weather was bad, I believe she took me home once and kissed me," she said, after a momentary pause, with a laugh, and as though it were an amusing confession. "She asked me all of a sudden whether I was fond of women." (But if she only believed that she remembered that Gilberte had taken her home, how could she say with such precision that Gilberte had asked her this odd question?) "In fact, I don't know what absurd idea came into my head to make a fool of her, I told her that I was." (One would have said that Albertine was afraid that Gilberte had told me this and did not wish me to come to the conclusion that

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

she was lying.) "But we did nothing at all." (It was strange, if they had exchanged confidences, that they should have done nothing, especially as, before this, they had kissed, according to Albertine.) "She took me home like that four or five times, perhaps more, and that is all." It cost me a great effort not to ply her with further questions, but, mastering myself so as to appear not to be attaching any importance to all this, I returned to Thomas Hardy. "Do you remember the stonemasons in *Jude the Obscure*, in *The Well-Beloved*, the blocks of stone which the father hews out of the island coming in boats to be piled up in the son's studio where they are turned into statues; in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* the parallelism of the tombs, and also the parallel line of the vessel, and the railway coaches containing the lovers and the dead woman; the parallelism between *The Well-Beloved*, where the man is in love with three women, and *A Pair of Blue Eyes* where the woman is in love with three men, and in short all those novels which can be laid one upon another like the vertically piled houses upon the rocky soil of the island. I cannot summarise the greatest writers like this in a moment's talk, but you would see in Stendhal a certain sense of altitude combining with the life of the spirit: the lofty place in which Julien Sorel is imprisoned, the tower on the summit of which Fabrice is confined, the belfry in which the Abbé Blanès pores over his astrology and from which Fabrice has such a magnificent bird's-eye view. You told me that you had seen some of Vermeer's pictures, you must have realised that they are fragments of an identical world, that it is always, however great the genius with which they have been recreated, the same table, the same carpet, the same

THE CAPTIVE

woman, the same novel and unique beauty, an enigma, at that epoch in which nothing resembles or explains it, if we seek not to find similarities in subjects but to isolate the peculiar impression that is produced by the colour. Well, then, this novel beauty remains identical in all Dostoievski's works, the Dostoievski woman (as distinctive as a Rembrandt woman) with her mysterious face, whose engaging beauty changes abruptly, as though her apparent good nature had been but make-believe, to a terrible insolence (although at heart it seems that she is more good than bad), is she not always the same, whether it be Nastasia Philipovna writing love letters to Aglaé and telling her that she hates her, or in a visit which is wholly identical with this—as also with that in which Nastasia Philipovna insults Vania's family—Grouchenka, as charming in Katherina Ivanovna's house as the other had supposed her to be terrible, then suddenly revealing her malevolence by insulting Katherina Ivanovna (although Grouchenka is good at heart); Grouchenka, Nastasia, figures as original, as mysterious not merely as Carpaccio's courtesans but as Rembrandt's Bathsheba. As, in Vermeer, there is the creation of a certain soul, of a certain colour of fabrics and places, so there is in Dostoievski creation not only of people but of their homes, and the house of the Murder in *Crime and Punishment* with its dvornik, is it not almost as marvellous as the masterpiece of the House of Murder in Dostoievski, that sombre house, so long, and so high, and so huge, of Rogojin in which he kills Nastasia Philipovna. That novel and terrible beauty of a house, that novel beauty blended with a woman's face, that is the unique thing which Dostoievski has given to the world, and the com-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

parisons that literary critics may make, between him and Gogol, or between him and Paul de Kock, are of no interest, being external to this secret beauty. Besides, if I have said to you that it is, from one novel to another, the same scene, it is in the compass of a single novel that the same scenes, the same characters reappear if the novel is at all long. I could illustrate this to you easily in *War and Peace*, and a certain scene in a carriage. . . .” “I didn’t want to interrupt you, but now that I see that you are leaving Dostoievski, I am afraid of forgetting. My dear boy, what was it you meant the other day when you said: ‘It is, so to speak, the Dostoievski side of Mme. de Sévigné.’ I must confess that I did not understand. It seems to me so different.” “Come, little girl, let me give you a kiss to thank you for remembering so well what I say, you shall go back to the pianola afterwards. And I must admit that what I said was rather stupid. But I said it for two reasons. The first is a special reason. What I meant was that Mme. de Sévigné, like Elstir, like Dostoievski, instead of presenting things in their logical sequence, that is to say beginning with the cause, shews us first of all the effect, the illusion that strikes us. That is how Dostoievski presents his characters. Their actions seem to us as misleading as those effects in Elstir’s pictures where the sea appears to be in the sky. We are quite surprised to find that some sullen person is really the best of men, or vice versa.” “Yes, but give me an example in Mme. de Sévigné.” “I admit,” I answered her with a laugh, “that I am splitting hairs very fine, but still I could find examples.” “But did he ever murder anyone, Dostoievski? The novels of his that I know might all be called *The Story of a Crime*. It is an obses-

THE CAPTIVE

sion with him, it is not natural that he should always be talking about it." "I don't think so, dear Albertine, I know little about his life. It is certain that, like everyone else, he was acquainted with sin, in one form or another, and probably in a form which the laws condemn. In that sense he must have been more or less criminal, like his heroes (not that they are altogether heroes, for that matter), who are found guilty with attenuating circumstances. And it is not perhaps necessary that he himself should have been a criminal. I am not a novelist; it is possible that creative writers are tempted by certain forms of life of which they have no personal experience. If I come with you to Versailles as we arranged, I shall shew you the portrait of the ultra-respectable man, the best of husbands, Choderlos de Laclos, who wrote the most appallingly corrupt book, and facing it that of Mme. de Genlis who wrote moral tales and was not content with betraying the Duchesse d'Orléans but tormented her by turning her children against her. I admit all the same that in Dostoievski this preoccupation with murder is something extraordinary which makes him very alien to me. I am stupefied enough when I hear Baudelaire say:

Si le viol, le poison, le poignard, l'incendie
N'ont pas encor brodé de leurs plaisants dessins
Le canevas banal de nos piteux destins,
C'est que notre âme, hélas! n'est pas assez hardie.

But I can at least assume that Baudelaire is not sincere. Whereas Dostoievski. . . . All that sort of thing seems to me as remote from myself as possible, unless there are parts of myself of which I know nothing, for we realise our own nature only in course of time. In Dostoievski

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

I find the deepest penetration but only into certain isolated regions of the human soul. But he is a great creator. For one thing, the world which he describes does really appear to have been created by him. All those buffoons who keep on reappearing, like Lebedeff, Karamazoff, Ivolghin, Segreff, that incredible procession, are a humanity more fantastic than that which peoples Rembrandt's *Night Watch*. And perhaps it is fantastic only in the same way, by the effect of lighting and costume, and is quite normal really. In any case it is at the same time full of profound and unique truths, which belong only to Dostoievski. They almost suggest, those buffoons, some trade or calling that no longer exists, like certain characters in the old drama, and yet how they reveal true aspects of the human soul! What astonishes me is the solemn manner in which people talk and write about Dostoievski. Have you ever noticed the part that self-respect and pride play in his characters? One would say that, to him, love and the most passionate hatred, goodness and treachery, timidity and insolence are merely two states of a single nature, their self-respect, their pride preventing Aglaé, Nastasia, the Captain whose beard Mitia pulls, Krassotkin, Aliosha's enemy-friend, from shewing themselves in their true colours. But there are many other great passages as well. I know very few of his books. But is it not a sculpturesque and simple theme, worthy of the most classical art, a frieze interrupted and resumed on which the tale of vengeance and expiation is unfolded, the crime of old Karamazoff getting the poor idiot with child, the mysterious, animal, unexplained impulse by which the mother, herself unconsciously the instrument of an avenging destiny, obey-

THE CAPTIVE

ing also obscurely her maternal instinct, feeling perhaps a combination of physical resentment and gratitude towards her seducer, comes to bear her child on old Karamazoff's ground. This is the first episode, mysterious, grand, august as a Creation of Woman among the sculptures at Orvieto. And as counterpart, the second episode more than twenty years later, the murder of old Karamazoff, the disgrace brought upon the Karamazoff family by this son of the idiot, Smerdiakoff, followed shortly afterwards by another action, as mysteriously sculpturesque and unexplained, of a beauty as obscure and natural as that of the childbirth in old Karamazoff's garden, Smerdiakoff hanging himself, his crime accomplished. As for Dostoievski, I was not straying so far from him as you thought when I mentioned Tolstoi who has imitated him closely. In Dostoievski there is, concentrated and fretful, a great deal of what was to blossom later on in Tolstoi. There is, in Dostoievski, that prophetic gloom of the primitives which their disciples will brighten and dispel." "My dear boy, what a terrible thing it is that you are so lazy. Just look at your view of literature, so far more interesting than the way we were made to study it; the essays that they used to make us write upon *Esther*: 'Monsieur,'—you remember," she said with a laugh, less from a desire to make fun of her masters and herself than from the pleasure of finding in her memory, in our common memory, a relic that was already almost venerable. But while she was speaking, and I continued to think of Vinteuil, it was the other, the materialist hypothesis, that of there being nothing, that in turn presented itself to my mind. I began to doubt, I said to myself that after all it might be the case that, if

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Vinteuil's phrases seemed to be the expression of certain states of the soul analogous to that which I had experienced when I tasted the madeleine that had been dipped in a cup of tea, there was nothing to assure me that the vagueness of such states was a sign of their profundity rather than of our not having learned yet to analyse them, so that there need be nothing more real in them than in other states. And yet that happiness, that sense of certainty in happiness while I was drinking the cup of tea, or when I smelt in the Champs-Élysées a smell of mouldering wood, was not an illusion. In any case, whispered the spirit of doubt, even if these states are more profound than others that occur in life, and defy analysis for the very reason that they bring into play too many forces which we have not yet taken into consideration, the charm of certain phrases of Vinteuil's music makes us think of them because it too defies analysis, but this does not prove that it has the same depth; the beauty of a phrase of pure music can easily appear to be the image of or at least akin to an intellectual impression which we have received, but simply because it is un-intellectual. And why then do we suppose to be specially profound those mysterious phrases which haunt certain works, including this septet by Vinteuil?

It was not, however, his music alone that Albertine played me; the pianola was to us at times like a scientific magic lantern (historical and geographical) and on the walls of this room in Paris, supplied with inventions more modern than that of Combray days, I would see, accordingly as Albertine played me Rameau or Borodin, extend before me now an eighteenth century tapestry sprinkled with cupids and roses, now the Eastern steppe

THE CAPTIVE

in which sounds are muffled by boundless distances and the soft carpet of snow. And these fleeting decorations were as it happened the only ones in my room, for if, at the time of inheriting my aunt Léonie's fortune, I had vowed that I would become a collector like Swann, would buy pictures, statues, all my money went upon securing horses, a motor-car, dresses for Albertine. But did not my room contain a work of art more precious than all these—Albertine herself? I looked at her. It was strange to me to think that it was she, she whom I had for so long thought it impossible even to know, who now, a wild beast tamed, a rosebush to which I had acted as trainer, as the framework, the trellis of its life, was seated thus, day by day, at home, by my side, before the pianola, with her back to my book-case. Her shoulders, which I had seen bowed and resentful when she was carrying her golf-clubs, were leaning against my books. Her shapely legs, which at first I had quite reasonably imagined as having trodden throughout her girlhood the pedals of a bicycle, now rose and fell alternately upon those of the pianola, upon which Albertine who had acquired a distinction which made me feel her more my own, because it was from myself that it came, pressed her shoes of cloth of gold. Her fingers, at one time trained to the handle-bars, now rested upon the keys like those of a Saint Cecilia. Her throat the curve of which, seen from my bed, was strong and full, at that distance and in the lamplight appeared more rosy, less rosy, however, than her face presented in profile, to which my gaze, issuing from the innermost depths of myself, charged with memories and burning with desire, added such a brilliancy, such an intensity of life that its relief seemed to stand

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

out and turn with almost the same magic power as on the day, in the hotel at Balbec, when my vision was clouded by my overpowering desire to kiss her; I prolonged each of its surfaces beyond what I was able to see and beneath what concealed it from me and made me feel all the more strongly—eyelids which half hid her eyes, hair that covered the upper part of her cheeks—the relief of those superimposed planes. Her eyes shone like, in a matrix in which the opal is still embedded, the two facets which alone have as yet been polished, which, become more brilliant than metal, reveal, in the midst of the blind matter that encumbers them, as it were the mauve, silken wings of a butterfly placed under glass. Her dark, curling hair, presenting a different appearance whenever she turned to ask me what she was to play next, now a splendid wing, sharp at the tip, broad at the base, feathered and triangular, now weaving the relief of its curls in a strong and varied chain, a mass of crests, of watersheds, of precipices, with its incisions so rich and so multiple, seemed to exceed the variety that nature normally realises and to correspond rather to the desire of a sculptor who accumulates difficulties in order to bring into greater prominence the suppleness, the fire, the moulding, the life of his execution, and brought out more strongly, by interrupting in order to resume them, the animated curve and, as it were, the rotation of the smooth and rosy face, of the polished dulness of a piece of painted wood. And, in contrast with all this relief, by the harmony also which united them with her, which had adapted her attitude to their form and purpose, the pianola which half concealed her like the keyboard of an organ, the bookcase, the whole of that corner of the

THE CAPTIVE

room seemed to be reduced to nothing more than the lighted sanctuary, the shrine of this angel musician, a work of art which, presently, by a charming magic, was to detach itself from its niche and offer to my kisses its precious, rosy substance. But no, Albertine was in no way to me a work of art. I knew what it meant to admire a woman in an artistic fashion, I had known Swann. For my own part, moreover, I was, no matter who the woman might be, incapable of doing so, having no sort of power of detached observation, never knowing what it was that I beheld, and I had been amazed when Swann added retrospectively for me an artistic dignity—by comparing her, as he liked to do with gallantry to her face, to some portrait by Luini, by finding in her attire the gown or the jewels of a picture by Giorgione—to a woman who had seemed to me to be devoid of interest. Nothing of that sort with me. The pleasure and the pain that I derived from Albertine never took, in order to reach me, the line of taste and intellect; indeed, to tell the truth, when I began to regard Albertine as an angel musician glazed with a marvellous patina whom I congratulated myself upon possessing, it was not long before I found her uninteresting; I soon became bored in her company, but these moments were of brief duration; we love only that in which we pursue something inaccessible, we love only what we do not possess, and very soon I returned to the conclusion that I did not possess Albertine. In her eyes I saw pass now the hope, now the memory, perhaps the regret of joys which I could not guess, which in that case she preferred to renounce rather than tell me of them, and which, gathering no more of them than certain flashes in her pupils, I no more perceived than

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

does the spectator who has been refused admission to the theatre, and who, his face glued to the glass panes of the door, can take in nothing of what is happening upon the stage. I do not know whether this was the case with her, but it is a strange thing, and so to speak a testimony by the most incredulous to their belief in good, this perseverance in falsehood shewn by all those who deceive us. It is no good our telling them that their lie hurts us more than a confession, it is no good their realising this for themselves, they will start lying again a moment later, to remain consistent with their original statement of how much we meant to them. Similarly an atheist who values his life will let himself be burned alive rather than allow any contradiction of the popular idea of his courage. During these hours, I used sometimes to see hover over her face, in her gaze, in her pout, in her smile, the reflexion of those inward visions the contemplation of which made her on these evenings unlike her usual self, remote from me to whom they were denied. "What are you thinking about, my darling?" "Why, nothing." Sometimes, in answer to this reproach that she told me nothing, she would at one moment tell me things which she was not unaware that I knew as well as anyone (like those statesmen who will never give you the least bit of news, but speak to you instead of what you could read for yourself in the papers the day before), at another would describe without the least precision, in a sort of false confidence, bicycle rides that she had taken at Balbec, the year before our first meeting. And as though I had guessed aright long ago, when I inferred from it that she must be a girl who was allowed a great deal of freedom, who went upon long jaunts, the mention of those rides

THE CAPTIVE

insinuated between Albertine's lips the same mysterious smile that had captivated me in those first days on the front at Balbec. She spoke to me also of the excursions that she had made with some girl-friends through the Dutch countryside, of returning to Amsterdam in the evening, at a late hour, when a dense and happy crowd of people almost all of whom she knew, thronged the streets, the canal towpaths, of which I felt that I could see reflected in Albertine's brilliant eyes as in the glancing windows of a fast-moving carriage, the innumerable, flickering fires. Since what is called aesthetic curiosity would deserve rather the name of indifference in comparison with the painful, unwearying curiosity that I felt as to the places in which Albertine had stayed, as to what she might have been doing on a particular evening, her smiles, the expressions in her eyes, the words that she had uttered, the kisses that she had received. No, never would the jealousy that I had felt one day of Saint-Loup, if it had persisted, have caused me this immense uneasiness. This love of woman for woman was something too unfamiliar; nothing enabled me to form a certain, an accurate idea of its pleasures, its quality. How many people, how many places (even places which did not concern her directly, vague pleasure resorts where she might have enjoyed some pleasure), how many scenes (wherever there was a crowd, where people could brush against her) Albertine—like a person who, shepherding all her escort, a whole company, past the barrier in front of her, secures their admission to the theatre—from the threshold of my imagination or of my memory, where I paid no attention to them, had introduced into my heart! Now the knowledge that I had of them was internal, im-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

mediate, spasmodic, painful. Love, what is it but space and time rendered perceptible by the heart.

And yet perhaps, had I myself been entirely faithful, I should have suffered because of infidelities which I would have been incapable of conceiving, whereas what it tortured me to imagine in Albertine was my own perpetual desire to find favour with fresh ladies, to plan fresh romances, was to suppose her guilty of the glance which I had been unable to resist casting, the other day, even when I was by her side, at the young bicyclists seated at tables in the Bois de Boulogne. As we have no personal knowledge, one might almost say that we can feel no jealousy save of ourself. Observation counts for little. It is only from the pleasure that we ourself have felt that we can derive knowledge and grief.

At moments, in Albertine's eyes, in the sudden inflammation of her cheeks, I felt as it were a gust of warmth pass furtively into regions more inaccessible to me than the sky, in which Albertine's memories, unknown to me, lived and moved. Then this beauty which, when I thought of the various years in which I had known Albertine whether upon the beach at Balbec or in Paris, I found that I had but recently discovered in her, and which consisted in the fact that my mistress was developing upon so many planes and embodied so many past days, this beauty became almost heartrending. Then beneath that blushing face I felt that there yawned like a gulf the inexhaustible expanse of the evenings when I had not known Albertine. I might, if I chose, take Albertine upon my knee, take her head in my hands; I might caress her, pass my hands slowly over her, but, just as if I had been handling a stone which encloses the

THE CAPTIVE

salt of immemorial oceans or the light of a star, I felt that I was touching no more than the sealed envelope of a person who inwardly reached to infinity. How I suffered from that position to which we are reduced by the carelessness of nature which, when instituting the division of bodies, never thought of making possible the interpenetration of souls (for if her body was in the power of mine, her mind escaped from the grasp of mine). And I became aware that Albertine was not even for me the marvellous captive with whom I had thought to enrich my home, while I concealed her presence there as completely, even from the friends who came to see me and never suspected that she was at the end of the corridor, in the room next to my own, as did that man of whom nobody knew that he kept sealed in a bottle the Princess of China; urging me with a cruel and fruitless pressure to the remembrance of the past, she resembled, if anything, a mighty goddess of Time. And if it was necessary that I should lose for her sake years, my fortune—and provided that I can say to myself, which is by no means certain, alas, that she herself lost nothing—I have nothing to regret. No doubt solitude would have been better, more fruitful, less painful. But if I had led the life of a collector which Swann counselled (the joys of which M. de Charlus reproached me with not knowing, when, with a blend of wit, insolence and good taste, he said to me: “How ugly your rooms are!”) what statues, what pictures long pursued, at length possessed, or even, to put it in the best light, contemplated with detachment, would, like the little wound which healed quickly enough, but which the unconscious clumsiness of Albertine, of people generally, or of my own thoughts was never long

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

in reopening, have given me access beyond my own boundaries, upon that avenue which, private though it be, debouches upon the high road along which passes what we learn to know only from the day on which it has made us suffer, the life of other people?

Sometimes the moon was so bright that, an hour after Albertine had gone to bed, I would go to her bedside to tell her to look at it through the window. I am certain that it was for this reason that I went to her room and not to assure myself that she was really there. What likelihood was there of her being able, had she wished, to escape? That would have required an improbable collusion with Françoise. In the dim room, I could see nothing save on the whiteness of the pillow a slender diadem of dark hair. But I could hear Albertine's breath. Her slumber was so profound that I hesitated at first to go as far as the bed. Then I sat down on the edge of it. Her sleep continued to flow with the same murmur. What I find it impossible to express is how gay her awakenings were. I embraced her, shook her. At once she ceased to sleep, but, without even a moment's interval, broke out in a laugh, saying as she twined her arms about my neck: "I was just beginning to wonder whether you were coming," and she laughed a tender, beautiful laugh. You would have said that her charming head, when she slept, was filled with nothing but gaiety, affection and laughter. And in waking her I had merely, as when we cut a fruit, released the gushing juice which quenches our thirst.

Meanwhile winter was at an end; the fine weather returned, and often when Albertine had just bidden me good night, my room, my curtains, the wall above the curtains being still quite dark, in the nuns' garden next

THE CAPTIVE

door I could hear, rich and precious in the silence like a harmonium in church, the modulation of an unknown bird which, in the Lydian mode, was already chanting mattins, and into the midst of my darkness flung the rich dazzling note of the sun that it could see. Once indeed, we heard all of a sudden the regular cadence of a plaintive appeal. It was the pigeons beginning to coo. "That proves that day has come already," said Albertine; and, her brows almost knitted, as though she missed, by living with me, the joys of the fine weather, "Spring has begun, if the pigeons have returned." The resemblance between their cooing and the crow of the cock was as profound and as obscure as, in Vinteuil's septet, the resemblance between the theme of the adagio and that of the closing piece, which is based upon the same key-theme as the other but so transformed by differences of tonality, of measure, that the profane outsider if he opens a book upon Vinteuil is astonished to find that they are all three based upon the same four notes, four notes which for that matter he may pick out with one finger upon the piano without recapturing anything of the three fragments. So this melancholy fragment performed by the pigeons was a sort of cockcrow in the minor, which did not soar up into the sky, did not rise vertically, but, regular as the braying of a donkey, enveloped in sweetness, went from one pigeon to another along a single horizontal line, and never raised itself, never changed its lateral plaint into that joyous appeal which had been uttered so often in the allegro of the introduction and in the finale.

Presently the nights grew shorter still and before what had been the hour of daybreak, I could see already steal-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

ing above my window-curtains the daily increasing whiteness of the dawn. If I resigned myself to allowing Albertine to continue to lead this life, in which, notwithstanding her denials, I felt that she had the impression of being a prisoner, it was only because I was sure that on the morrow I should be able to set myself, at the same time to work and to leave my bed, to go out of doors, to prepare our departure for some property which we should buy and where Albertine would be able to lead more freely and without anxiety on my account, the life of country or seaside, of boating or hunting, which appealed to her. Only, on the morrow; that past which I loved and detested by turns in Albertine, it would so happen that (as, when it is the present, between himself and us, everyone, from calculation, or courtesy, or pity, sets to work to weave a curtain of falsehood which we mistake for the truth), retrospectively, one of the hours which composed it, and even those which I had supposed myself to know, offered me all of a sudden an aspect which some one no longer made any attempt to conceal from me and which was then quite different from that in which it had previously appeared to me. Behind some look in her eyes, in place of the honest thought which I had formerly supposed that I could read in it, was a desire, unsuspected hitherto, which revealed itself, alienating from me a fresh region of Albertine's heart which I had believed to be assimilated to my own. For instance, when Andrée left Balbec in the month of July, Albertine had never told me that she was to see her again shortly, and I supposed that she had seen her even sooner than she expected, since, in view of the great unhappiness that I had felt at Balbec, on that night of the fourteenth of

THE CAPTIVE

September, she had made me the sacrifice of not remaining there and of returning at once to Paris. When she had arrived there on the fifteenth, I had asked her to go and see Andrée and had said to her: "Was she pleased to see you again?" Now one day Mme. Bontemps had called, bringing something for Albertine; I saw her for a moment and told her that Albertine had gone out with Andrée: "They have gone for a drive in the country." "Yes," replied Mme. Bontemps, "Albertine is always ready to go to the country. Three years ago, for instance, she simply had to go, every day, to the Buttes-Chaumont." At the name Buttes-Chaumont, a place where Albertine had told me that she had never been, my breath stopped for a moment. The truth is the most cunning of enemies. It launches its attacks upon the points of our heart at which we were not expecting them, and have prepared no defence. Had Albertine been lying to her aunt, then, when she said that she went every day to the Buttes-Chaumont, or to myself, more recently, when she told me that she did not know the place? "Fortunately," Mme. Bontemps went on, "that poor Andrée will soon be leaving for a more bracing country, for the real country, she needs it badly, she is not looking at all well. It is true that she did not have an opportunity this summer of getting the fresh air she requires. Just think, she left Balbec at the end of July, expecting to go back there in September, and then her brother put his knee out, and she was unable to go back." So Albertine was expecting her at Balbec and had concealed this from me. It is true that it was all the more kind of her to have offered to return to Paris with me. Unless. . . . "Yes, I remember Albertine's mentioning it to me" (this was

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

untrue). "When did the accident occur, again? I am not very clear about it." "Why, to my mind, it occurred in the very nick of time, for a day later the lease of the villa began, and Andrée's grandmother would have had to pay a month's rent for nothing. He hurt his leg on the fourteenth of September, she was in time to telegraph to Albertine on the morning of the fifteenth that she was not coming and Albertine was in time to warn the agent. A day later, the lease would have run on to the middle of October." And so, no doubt, when Albertine, changing her mind, had said to me: "Let us go this evening," what she saw with her mind's eye was an apartment, that of Andrée's grandmother, where, as soon as we returned, she would be able to see the friend whom, without my suspecting it, she had supposed that she would be seeing in a few days at Balbec. Those kind words which she had used, in offering to return to Paris with me, in contrast to her headstrong refusal a little earlier, I had sought to attribute them to a reawakening of her good nature. They were simply and solely the effect of a change that had occurred in a situation which we do not know, and which is the whole secret of the variation of the conduct of the women who are not in love with us. They obstinately refuse to give us an assignation for the morrow, because they are tired, because their grandfather insists upon their dining with him: "But come later," we insist. "He keeps me very late. He may want to see me home." The whole truth is that they have made an appointment with some man whom they like. Suddenly it happens that he is no longer free. And they come to tell us how sorry they are to have disappointed us, that the grandfather can go and hang himself, that there is nothing in

the world to keep them from remaining with us. I ought to have recognised these phrases in Albertine's language to me on the day of my departure from Balbec, but to interpret that language I should have needed to remember at the time two special features in Albertine's character which now recurred to my mind, one to console me, the other to make me wretched, for we find a little of everything in our memory; it is a sort of pharmacy, of chemical laboratory, in which our groping hand comes to rest now upon a sedative drug, now upon a dangerous poison. The first, the consoling feature was that habit of making a single action serve the pleasure of several persons, that multiple utilisation of whatever she did, which was typical of Albertine. It was quite in keeping with her character, when she returned to Paris (the fact that Andrée was not coming back might make it inconvenient for her to remain at Balbec, without any implication that she could not exist apart from Andrée), to derive from that single journey an opportunity of touching two people each of whom she genuinely loved, myself, by making me believe that she was coming in order not to let me be alone, so that I should not be unhappy, out of devotion to me, Andrée by persuading her that, as soon as there was no longer any question of her coming to Balbec, she herself did not wish to remain there a moment longer, that she had prolonged her stay there only in the hope of seeing Andrée and was now hurrying back to join her. Now, Albertine's departure with myself was such an immediate sequel, on the one hand to my grief, my desire to return to Paris, on the other hand to Andrée's telegram, that it was quite natural that Andrée and I, unaware, respectively, she of my grief, I of her

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

telegram, should have supposed that Albertine's departure from Balbec was the effect of the one cause that each of us knew, which indeed it followed at so short an interval and so unexpectedly. And in this case, I might still believe that the thought of keeping me company had been Albertine's real object, while she had not chosen to overlook an opportunity of thereby establishing a claim to Andrée's gratitude. But unfortunately I remembered almost at once another of Albertine's characteristics, which was the vivacity with which she was gripped by the irresistible temptation of a pleasure. And so I recalled how, when she had decided to leave, she had been so impatient to get to the tram, how she had pushed past the Manager who, as he tried to detain us, might have made us miss the omnibus, the shrug of connivance that she had given me, by which I had been so touched, when, on the crawler, M. de Cambremer had asked us whether we could not "postpone it by a week." Yes, what she saw before her eyes at that moment, what made her so feverishly anxious to leave, what she was so impatient to see again was that emptied apartment which I had once visited, the home of Andrée's grandmother, left in charge of an old footman, a luxurious apartment, facing south, but so empty, so silent, that the sun appeared to have spread dust-sheets over the sofa, the armchairs of the room in which Albertine and Andrée would ask the respectful caretaker, perhaps unsuspecting, perhaps an accomplice, to allow them to rest for a while. I could always see it now, empty, with a bed or a sofa, that room, to which, whenever Albertine seemed pressed for time and serious, she set off to meet her friend, who had doubtless arrived there before her since her time was more

THE CAPTIVE

her own. I had never before given a thought to that apartment which now possessed for me a horrible beauty. The unknown element in the lives of other people is like that in nature, which each fresh scientific discovery merely reduces, but does not abolish. A jealous lover exasperates the woman with whom he is in love by depriving her of a thousand unimportant pleasures, but those pleasures which are the keystone of her life she conceals in a place where, in the moments in which he thinks that he is shewing the most intelligent perspicacity and third parties are keeping him most closely informed, he never dreams of looking. Anyhow, Andrée was at least going to leave Paris. But I did not wish that Albertine should be in a position to despise me as having been the dupe of herself and Andrée. One of these days, I would tell her. And thus I should force her perhaps to speak to me more frankly, by shewing her that I was informed, all the same, of the things that she concealed from me. But I did not wish to mention it to her for the moment, first of all because, so soon after her aunt's visit, she would guess from where my information came, would block that source and would not dread other, unknown sources. Also because I did not wish to risk, so long as I was not absolutely certain of keeping Albertine for as long as I chose, arousing in her too frequent irritations which might have the effect of making her decide to leave me. It is true that if I reasoned, sought the truth, prognosticated the future on the basis of her speech, which always approved of all my plans, assuring me how much she loved this life, of how little her seclusion deprived her, I had no doubt that she would remain with me always. I was indeed greatly annoyed by the thought, I felt that I was missing life,

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the universe, which I had never enjoyed, bartered for a woman in whom I could no longer find anything novel. I could not even go to Venice, where, while I lay in bed, I should be too keenly tormented by the fear of the advances that might be made to her by the gondolier, the people in the hotel, the Venetian women. But if I reasoned, on the other hand, upon the other hypothesis, that which rested not upon Albertine's speech, but upon silences, looks, blushes, sulks, and indeed bursts of anger, which I could quite easily have shewn her to be unfounded and which I preferred to appear not to notice, then I said to myself that she was finding this life insupportable, that all the time she found herself deprived of what she loved, and that inevitably she must one day leave me. All that I wished, if she did so, was that I might choose the moment in which it would not be too painful to me, and also that it might be in a season when she could not go to any of the places in which I imagined her debaucheries, either at Amsterdam, or with Andrée whom she would see again, it was true, a few months later. But in the interval I should have grown calm and their meeting would leave me unmoved. In any case, I must wait before I could think of it until I was cured of the slight relapse that had been caused by my discovery of the reasons by which Albertine, at an interval of a few hours, had been determined not to leave, and then to leave Balbec immediately. I must allow time for the symptoms to disappear which could only go on diminishing if I learned nothing new, but which were still too acute not to render more painful, more difficult, an operation of rupture recognised now as inevitable, but in no sense urgent, and one that would be better performed in

"cold blood." Of this choice of the right moment I was the master, for if she decided to leave me before I had made up my mind, at the moment when she informed me that she had had enough of this life, there would always be time for me to think of resisting her arguments, to offer her a larger freedom, to promise her some great pleasure in the near future which she herself would be anxious to await, at worst, if I could find no recourse save to her heart, to assure her of my grief. I was therefore quite at my ease from this point of view, without, however, being very logical with myself. For, in the hypotheses in which I left out of account the things which she said and announced, I supposed that, when it was a question of her leaving me, she would give me her reasons beforehand, would allow me to fight and to conquer them. I felt that my life with Albertine was, on the one hand, when I was not jealous, mere boredom, and on the other hand, when I was jealous, constant suffering. Supposing that there was any happiness in it, it could not last. I possessed the same spirit of wisdom which had inspired me at Balbec, when, on the evening when we had been happy together after Mme. de Cambremer's call, I determined to give her up, because I knew that by prolonging our intimacy I should gain nothing. Only, even now, I imagined that the memory which I should preserve of her would be like a sort of vibration prolonged by a pedal from the last moment of our parting. And so I intended to choose a pleasant moment, so that it might be it which continued to vibrate in me. It must not be too difficult, I must not wait too long, I must be prudent. And yet, having waited so long, it would be madness not to wait a few days longer, until an acceptable moment should

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

offer itself, rather than risk seeing her depart with that same sense of revolt which I had felt in the past when Mamma left my bedside without bidding me good night, or when she said good-bye to me at the station. At all costs I multiplied the favours that I was able to bestow upon her. As for the Fortuny gowns, we had at length decided upon one in blue and gold lined with pink which was just ready. And I had ordered, at the same time, the other five which she had relinquished with regret, out of preference for this last. Yet with the coming of spring, two months after her aunt's conversation with me, I allowed myself to be carried away by anger one evening. It was the very evening on which Albertine had put on for the first time the indoor gown in gold and blue by Fortuny which, by reminding me of Venice, made me feel all the more strongly what I was sacrificing for her, who felt no corresponding gratitude towards me. If I had never seen Venice, I had dreamed of it incessantly since those Easter holidays which, when still a boy, I had been going to spend there, and earlier still, since the Titian prints and Giotto photographs which Swann had given me long ago at Combray. The Fortuny gown which Albertine was wearing that evening seemed to me the tempting phantom of that invisible Venice. It swarmed with Arabic ornaments, like the Venetian palaces hidden like sultanas behind a screen of pierced stone, like the bindings in the Ambrosian library, like the columns from which the Oriental birds that symbolised alternatively life and death were repeated in the mirror of the fabric, of an intense blue which, as my gaze extended over it, was changed into a malleable gold, by those same transmutations which, before the advancing gondolas, change into flaming metal

THE CAPTIVE

the azure of the Grand Canal. And the sleeves were lined with a cherry pink which is so peculiarly Venetian that it is called Tiepolo pink.

In the course of the day, Françoise had let fall in my hearing that Albertine was satisfied with nothing, that when I sent word to her that I would be going out with her, or that I would not be going out, that the motor-car would come to fetch her, or would not come, she almost shrugged her shoulders and would barely give a polite answer. This evening, when I felt that she was in a bad temper, and when the first heat of summer had wrought upon my nerves, I could not restrain my anger and reproached her with her ingratitude. "Yes, you can ask anybody," I shouted at the top of my voice, quite beyond myself, "you can ask Françoise, it is common knowledge." But immediately I remembered how Albertine had once told me how terrifying she found me when I was angry, and had applied to myself the speech of Esther:

Jugez combien ce front irrité contre moi
Dans mon âme troublée a dû jeter d'émoi.
Hélas sans frissonner quel cœur audacieux
Soutiendrait les éclairs qui partent de ses yeux.

I felt ashamed of my violence. And, to make reparation for what I had done, without, however, acknowledging a defeat, so that my peace might be an armed and awe-inspiring peace, while at the same time I thought it as well to shew her once again that I was not afraid of a rupture so that she might not feel any temptation to break with me: "Forgive me, my little Albertine, I am ashamed of my violence, I don't know how to apologise. If we are not able to get on together, if we are to be

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

obliged to part, it must not be in this fashion, it would not be worthy of us. We will part, if part we must, but first of all I wish to beg your pardon most humbly and from the bottom of my heart." I decided that, to atone for my rudeness and also to make certain of her intention to remain with me for some time to come, at any rate until Andrée should have left Paris, which would be in three weeks, it would be as well, next day, to think of some pleasure greater than any that she had yet had and fairly slow in its fulfilment; also, since I was going to wipe out the offence that I had given her, perhaps I should do well to take advantage of this moment to shew her that I knew more about her life than she supposed. The resentment that she would feel would be removed on the morrow by my kindness, but the warning would remain in her mind. "Yes, my little Albertine, forgive me if I was violent. I am not quite as much to blame as you think. There are wicked people in the world who are trying to make us quarrel; I have always refrained from mentioning this, as I did not wish to torment you. But sometimes I am driven out of my mind by certain accusations. For instance," I went on, "they are tormenting me at present, they are persecuting me with reports of your relations, but with Andrée." "With Andrée?" she cried, her face ablaze with anger. And astonishment or the desire to appear astonished made her open her eyes wide. "How charming! And may one know who has been telling you these pretty tales, may I be allowed to speak to these persons, to learn from them upon what they are basing their scandals?" "My little Albertine, I do not know, the letters are anonymous, but from people whom you would perhaps have no difficulty in finding"

THE CAPTIVE

(this to shew her that I did not believe that she would try) "for they must know you quite well. The last one, I must admit (and I mention it because it deals with a trifle, and there is nothing at all unpleasant in it), made me furious all the same. It informed me that if, on the day when we left Balbec, you first of all wished to remain there and then decided to go, that was because in the interval you had received a letter from Andrée telling you that she was not coming." "I know quite well that Andrée wrote to tell me that she wasn't coming, in fact she telegraphed; I can't shew you the telegram because I didn't keep it, but it wasn't that day; what difference do you suppose it could make to me whether Andrée came or not?" The words "what difference do you suppose it could make to me" were a proof of anger and that "it did make" some difference, but were not necessarily a proof that Albertine had returned to Paris solely from a desire to see Andrée. Whenever Albertine saw one of the real or alleged motives of one of her actions discovered by a person to whom she had pleaded a different motive, she became angry, even if the person were he for whose sake she had really performed the action. That Albertine believed that this information as to what she had been doing was not furnished me in anonymous letters against my will but was eagerly demanded by myself, could never have been deduced from the words which she next uttered, in which she appeared to accept my story of the anonymous letters, but rather from her air of anger with myself, an anger which appeared to be merely the explosion of her previous ill humour, just as the espionage in which, by this hypothesis, she must suppose that I had been indulging would have been only

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

the culmination of a supervision of all her actions as to which she had felt no doubt for a long time past. Her anger extended even to Andrée herself, and deciding no doubt that from now onwards I should never be calm again even when she went out with Andrée: "Besides, Andrée makes me wild. She is a deadly bore. I never want to go anywhere with her again. You can tell that to the people who informed you that I came back to Paris for her sake. Suppose I were to tell you that after all the years I've known Andrée, I couldn't even describe her face to you, I've hardly ever looked at it!" Now at Balbec, in that first year, she had said to me: "Andrée is lovely." It is true that this did not mean that she had had amorous relations with her, and indeed I had never heard her speak at that time save with indignation of any relations of that sort. But could she not have changed even without being aware that she had changed, never supposing that her amusements with a girl friend were the same thing as the immoral relations, not clearly defined in her own mind, which she condemned in other women? Was it not possible also that this same change, and this same unconsciousness of change which had occurred in her relations with myself, whose kisses she had repulsed at Balbec with such indignation, kisses which afterwards she was to give me of her own accord every day, which (so, at least, I hoped) she would give me for a long time to come, and which she was going to give me in a moment? "But, my darling, how do you expect me to tell them when I do not know who they are?" This answer was so forceful that it ought to have melted the objections and doubts which I saw crystallised in Albertine's pupils. But it left them intact. I was now silent,

THE CAPTIVE

and yet she continued to gaze at me with that persistent attention which we give to some one who has not finished speaking. I begged her pardon once more. She replied that she had nothing to forgive me. She had grown very gentle again. But, beneath her sad and troubled features, it seemed to me that a secret had taken shape. I knew quite well that she could not leave me without warning me, besides she could not either wish to leave me (it was in a week's time that she was to try on the new Fortuny gowns), nor decently do so, as my mother was returning to Paris at the end of the week and her aunt also. Why, since it was impossible for her to depart, did I repeat to her several times that we should be going out together next day to look at some Venetian glass which I wished to give her, and why was I comforted when I heard her say that that was settled? When it was time for her to bid me good night and I kissed her, she did not behave as usual, but turned aside—it was barely a minute or two since I had been thinking how pleasant it was that she now gave me every evening what she had refused me at Balbec—she did not return my kiss. One would have said that, having quarrelled with me, she was not prepared to give me a token of affection which might later on have appeared to me a treacherous denial of that quarrel. One would have said that she was attuning her actions to that quarrel, and yet with moderation, whether so as not to announce it, or because, while breaking off her carnal relations with me, she wished still to remain my friend. I embraced her then a second time, pressing to my heart the mirroring and gilded azure of the Grand Canal and the mating birds, symbols of death and resurrection. But for the second time she drew

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

away and, instead of returning my kiss, withdrew with the sort of instinctive and fatal obstinacy of animals that feel the hand of death. This presentiment which she seemed to be expressing overpowered me also, and filled me with so anxious an alarm that when she had reached the door I had not the courage to let her go, and called her back. "Albertine," I said to her, "I am not at all sleepy. If you don't want to go to sleep yourself, you might stay here a little longer, if you like, but I don't really mind, and I don't on any account want to tire you." I felt that if I had been able to make her undress, and to have her there in her white nightgown, in which she seemed more rosy, warmer, in which she excited my senses more keenly, the reconciliation would have been more complete. But I hesitated for an instant, for the blue border of her gown added to her face a beauty, an illumination, a sky without which she would have seemed to me more harsh. She came back slowly and said to me very sweetly, and still with the same downcast, sorrowful expression: "I can stay as long as you like, I am not sleepy." Her reply calmed me, for, so long as she was in the room, I felt that I could take thought for the future and that moreover it implied friendship, obedience, but of a certain sort, which seemed to me to be bounded by that secret which I felt to exist behind her sorrowful gaze, her altered manner, partly in spite of herself, partly no doubt to attune them beforehand to something which I did not know. I felt that, all the same, I needed only to have her all in white, with her throat bare, in front of me, as I had seen her at Balbec in bed, to find the courage which would make her obliged to yield. "Since you are so kind as to stay here a moment to console me, you ought to take off your gown,

THE CAPTIVE

it is too hot, too stiff, I dare not approach you for fear of crumpling that fine stuff and we have those symbolic birds between us. Undress, my darling." "No, I couldn't possibly take off this dress here. I shall undress in my own room presently." "Then you won't even come and sit down on my bed?" "Why, of course." She remained, however, a little way from me, by my feet. We talked. I know that I then uttered the word death, as though Albertine were about to die. It seems that events are larger than the moment in which they occur and cannot confine themselves in it. Certainly they overflow into the future through the memory that we retain of them, but they demand a place also in the time that precedes them. One may say that we do not then see them as they are to be, but in memory are they not modified also?

When I saw that she deliberately refrained from kissing me, realising that I was merely wasting my time, that it was only after the kiss that the soothing, the genuine minutes would begin, I said to her: "Good night, it is too late," because that would make her kiss me and we could then continue. But after saying: "Good night, see you sleep well," exactly as she had done twice already, she contented herself with letting me kiss her on the cheek. This time I dared not call her back, but my heart beat so violently that I could not lie down again. Like a bird that flies from one end of its cage to the other, without stopping I passed from the anxiety lest Albertine should leave the house to a state of comparative calm. This calm was produced by the argument which I kept on repeating several times every minute: "She cannot go without warning me, she never said anything about going," and I was more or less calmed. But at once I re-

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

mind myself: "And yet if to-morrow I find that she has gone. My very anxiety must be founded upon something; why did she not kiss me?" At this my heart ached horribly. Then it was slightly soothed by the argument which I advanced once more, but I ended with a headache, so incessant and monotonous was this movement of my thoughts. There are thus certain mental states, and especially anxiety, which, as they offer us only two alternatives, are in a way as atrociously circumscribed as a merely physical pain. I perpetually repeated the argument which justified my anxiety and that which proved it false and reassured me, within as narrow a space as the sick man who explores without ceasing, by an internal movement, the organ that is causing his suffering, and withdraws for an instant from the painful spot to return to it a moment later. Suddenly, in the silence of the night, I was startled by a sound apparently insignificant which, however, filled me with terror, the sound of Albertine's window being violently opened. When I heard no further sound, I asked myself why this had caused me such alarm. In itself there was nothing so extraordinary; but I probably gave it two interpretations which appalled me equally. In the first place it was one of the conventions of our life in common, since I was afraid of draughts, that nobody must ever open a window at night. This had been explained to Albertine when she came to stay in the house, and albeit she was convinced that this was a mania on my part and thoroughly unhealthy, she had promised me that she would never break the rule. And she was so timorous about everything that she knew to be my wish, even if she blamed me for it, that she would have gone to sleep with the stench of a

chimney on fire rather than open her window, just as, however important the circumstances, she would not have had me called in the morning. It was only one of the minor conventions of our life, but from the moment when she violated it without having said anything to me, did not that mean that she no longer needed to take precautions, that she would violate them all just as easily? Besides, the sound had been violent, almost ill-bred, as though she had flung the window open crimson with rage, and saying: "This life is stifling me, so that's that, I must have air!" I did not exactly say all this to myself, but I continued to think, as of a presage more mysterious and more funereal than the hoot of an owl, of that sound of the window which Albertine had opened. Filled with an agitation such as I had not felt perhaps since the evening at Combray when Swann had been dining downstairs, I paced the corridor for a long time, hoping, by the noise that I made, to attract Albertine's attention, hoping that she would take pity upon me and would call me to her, but I heard no sound come from her room. Gradually I began to feel that it was too late. She must long have been asleep. I went back to bed. In the morning, as soon as I awoke, since no one ever came to my room, whatever might have happened, without a summons, I rang for Françoise. And at the same time I thought: "I must speak to Albertine about a yacht which I mean to have built for her." As I took my letters I said to Françoise without looking at her: "Presently I shall have something to say to Mlle. Albertine; is she out of bed yet?" "Yes, she got up early." I felt arise in me, as in a sudden gust of wind, a thousand anxieties, which I was unable to keep in suspense in my bosom. The

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

tumult there was so great that I was quite out of breath as though caught in a tempest. "Ah! But where is she just now?" "I expect she's in her room." "Ah! Good! Very well, I shall see her presently." I breathed again, she was still in the house, my agitation subsided. Albertine was there, it was almost immaterial to me whether she was or not. Besides, had it not been absurd to suppose that she could possibly not be there? I fell asleep, but, in spite of my certainty that she would not leave me, into a light sleep and of a lightness relative to her alone. For by the sounds that could be connected only with work in the courtyard, while I heard them vaguely in my sleep, I remained unmoved, whereas the slightest rustle that came from her room, when she left it, or noiselessly returned, pressing the bell so gently, made me start, ran through my whole body, left me with a throbbing heart, albeit I had heard it in a profound slumber, just as my grandmother in the last days before her death, when she was plunged in an immobility which nothing could disturb and which the doctors called coma, would begin, I was told, to tremble for a moment like a leaf when she heard the three rings with which I was in the habit of summoning Françoise, and which, even when I made them softer, during that week, so as not to disturb the silence of the death-chamber, nobody, Françoise assured me, could mistake, because of a way that I had, and was quite unconscious of having, of pressing the bell, for the ring of anyone else. Had I then entered myself into my last agony, was this the approach of death?

That day and the next we went out together, since Albertine refused to go out again with Andrée. I never even mentioned the yacht to her. These excursions had

THE CAPTIVE

completely restored my peace of mind. But she had continued at night to embrace me in the same novel fashion, which left me furious. I could interpret it now in no other way than as a method of shewing me that she was cross with me, which seemed to me perfectly absurd after my incessant kindness to her. And so, no longer deriving from her even those carnal satisfactions on which I depended, finding her positively ugly in her ill humour, I felt all the more keenly my deprivation of all the women and of the travels for which these first warm days re-awakened my desire. Thanks no doubt to the scattered memory of the forgotten assignations that I had had, while still a schoolboy, with women, beneath trees already in full leaf, this springtime region in which the endless round of our dwelling-place travelling through the seasons had halted for the last three days, beneath a clement sky, and from which all the roads pointed towards picnics in the country, boating parties, pleasure trips, seemed to me to be the land of women just as much as it was the land of trees, and the land in which a pleasure that was everywhere offered became permissible to my convalescent strength. Resigning myself to idleness, resigning myself to chastity, to tasting pleasure only with a woman whom I did not love, resigning myself to remaining shut up in my room, to not travelling, all this was possible in the Old World in which we had been only the day before, in the empty world of winter, but was no longer possible in this new universe bursting with green leaves, in which I had awaked like a young Adam faced for the first time with the problem of existence, of happiness, who is not bowed down beneath the weight of the accumulation of previous negative solutions. Albertine's presence weighed

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

upon me, and so I regarded her sullenly, feeling that it was a pity that we had not had a rupture. I wanted to go to Venice, I wanted in the meantime to go to the Louvre to look at Venetian pictures and to the Luxembourg to see the two Elstirs which, as I had just heard, the Duchesse de Guermantes had recently sold to that gallery, those that I had so greatly admired, the *Pleasures of the Dance* and the *Portrait of the X family*. But I was afraid that, in the former, certain lascivious poses might give Albertine a desire, a regretful longing for popular rejoicings, making her say to herself that perhaps a certain life which she had never led, a life of fireworks and country taverns, was not so bad. Already, in anticipation, I was afraid lest, on the Fourteenth of July, she would ask me to take her to a popular ball and I dreamed of some impossible event which would cancel the national holiday. And besides, there were also present, in Elstir's pictures, certain nude female figures in the leafy landscapes of the South which might make Albertine think of certain pleasures, albeit Elstir himself (but would she not lower the standard of his work?) had seen in them nothing more than plastic beauty, or rather the beauty of snowy monuments which is assumed by the bodies of women seated among verdure. And so I resigned myself to abandoning that pleasure and made up my mind to go to Versailles. Albertine had remained in her room, reading, in her Fortuny gown. I asked her if she would like to go with me to Versailles. She had the charming quality of being always ready for anything, perhaps because she had been accustomed in the past to spend half her time as the guest of other people, and, just as she had made up her mind to come to Paris, in two min-

THE CAPTIVE

utes, she said to me: "I can come as I am, we shan't be getting out of the car." She hesitated for a moment between two cloaks in which to conceal her indoor dress—as she might have hesitated between two friends in the choice of an escort—chose one of dark blue, an admirable choice, thrust a pin into a hat. In a minute, she was ready, before I had put on my greatcoat, and we went to Versailles. This very promptitude, this absolute docility left me more reassured, as though indeed, without having any special reason for uneasiness, I had been in need of reassurance. "After all I have nothing to fear, she does everything that I ask, in spite of the noise she made with her window the other night. The moment I spoke of going out, she flung that blue cloak over her gown and out she came, that is not what a rebel would have done, a person who was no longer on friendly terms with me," I said to myself as we went to Versailles. We stayed there a long time. The whole sky was formed of that radiant and almost pale blue which the wayfarer lying down in a field sees at times above his head, but so consistent, so intense, that he feels that the blue of which it is composed has been utilised without any alloy and with such an inexhaustible richness that one might delve more and more deeply into its substance without encountering an atom of anything but that same blue. I thought of my grandmother who—in human art as in nature—loved grandeur, and who used to enjoy watching the steeple of Saint-Hilaire soar into the same blue. Suddenly I felt once again a longing for my lost freedom as I heard a sound which I did not at first identify, a sound which my grandmother would have loved as well. It was like the buzz of a wasp. "Why," said Albertine, "there is an

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

aeroplane, it is high up in the sky, so high." I looked in every direction but could see only, unmarred by any black spot, the unbroken pallor of the serene azure. I continued nevertheless to hear the humming of the wings which suddenly came into my field of vision. Up there a pair of tiny wings, dark and flashing, punctured the continuous blue of the unalterable sky. I had at length been able to attach the buzzing to its cause, to that little insect throbbing up there in the sky, probably quite five thousand feet above me; I could see it hum. Perhaps at a time when distances by land had not yet been habitually shortened by speed as they are to-day, the whistle of a passing train a mile off was endowed with that beauty which now and for some time to come will stir our emotions in the hum of an aeroplane five thousand feet up, with the thought that the distances traversed in this vertical journey are the same as those on the ground, and that in this other direction, where the measurements appeared to us different because it had seemed impossible to make the attempt, an aeroplane at five thousand feet is no farther away than a train a mile off, is indeed nearer, the identical trajectory occurring in a purer medium, with no separation of the traveller from his starting point, just as on the sea or across the plains, in calm weather, the wake of a ship that is already far away or the breath of a single zephyr will furrow the ocean of water or of grain.

"After all neither of us is really hungry, we might have looked in at the Verdurins'," Albertine said to me, "this is their day and their hour." "But I thought you were angry with them?" "Oh! There are all sorts of stories about them, but really they're not so bad as all that. Madame Verdurin has always been very nice to me.

THE CAPTIVE

Besides, one can't keep on quarrelling all the time with everybody. They have their faults, but who hasn't?" "You are not dressed, you would have to go home and dress, that would make us very late." I added that I was hungry. "Yes, you are right, let us eat by ourselves," replied Albertine with that marvellous docility which continued to stupefy me. We stopped at a big pastrycook's, situated almost outside the town, which at that time enjoyed a certain reputation. A lady was leaving the place, and asked the girl in charge for her things. And after the lady had gone, Albertine cast repeated glances at the girl as though she wished to attract her attention while the other was putting away cups, plates, cakes, for it was getting late. She came near me only if I asked for something. And what happened then was that as the girl, who moreover was extremely tall, was standing up while she waited upon us and Albertine was seated beside me, each time, Albertine, in an attempt to attract her attention, raised vertically towards her a sunny gaze which compelled her to elevate her pupils to an even higher angle since, the girl being directly in front of us, Albertine had not the remedy of tempering the angle with the obliquity of her gaze. She was obliged, without raising her head unduly, to make her eyes ascend to that disproportionate height at which the girl's eyes were situated. Out of consideration for myself, Albertine lowered her own at once, and, as the girl had paid her no attention, began again. This led to a series of vain imploring elevations before an inaccessible deity. Then the girl had nothing left to do but to put straight a big table, next to ours. Now Albertine's gaze need only be natural. But never once did the girl's eyes rest upon my mistress.

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

This did not surprise me, for I knew that the woman, with whom I was slightly acquainted, had lovers, although she was married, but managed to conceal her intrigues completely, which astonished me vastly in view of her prodigious stupidity. I studied the woman while we finished eating. Concentrated upon her task, she was almost impolite to Albertine, in the sense that she had not a glance to spare for her, not that Albertine's attitude was not perfectly correct. The other arranged things, went on arranging things, without letting anything distract her. The counting and putting away of the coffee-spoons, the fruit-knives, might have been entrusted not to this large and handsome woman, but, by a "labour-saving" device, to a mere machine, and you would not have seen so complete an isolation from Albertine's attention, and yet she did not lower her eyes, did not let herself become absorbed, allowed her eyes, her charms to shine in an undivided attention to her work. It is true that if this woman had not been a particularly foolish person (not only was this her reputation, but I knew it by experience), this detachment might have been a supreme proof of her cunning. And I know very well that the stupidest person, if his desire or his pocket is involved, can, in that sole instance, emerging from the nullity of his stupid life, adapt himself immediately to the workings of the most complicated machinery; all the same, this would have been too subtle a supposition in the case of a woman as idiotic as this. Her idiocy even assumed the improbable form of impoliteness! Never once did she look at Albertine whom, after all, she could not help seeing. It was not very flattering for my mistress, but, when all was said, I was delighted that Albertine should receive this

THE CAPTIVE

little lesson and should see that frequently women paid no attention to her. We left the pastry-cook's, got into our carriage and were already on our way home when I was seized by a sudden regret that I had not taken the waitress aside and begged her on no account to tell the lady who had come out of the shop as we were going in my name and address, which she must know because of the orders I had constantly left with her. It was indeed undesirable that the lady should be enabled thus to learn, indirectly, Albertine's address. But I felt that it would be a waste of time to turn back for so small a matter, and that I should appear to be attaching too great an importance to it in the eyes of the idiotic and untruthful waitress. I decided, finally, that I should have to return there, in a week's time, to make this request, and that it was a great bore, since one always forgot half the things that one had to say, to have to do even the simplest things in instalments. In this connexion, I cannot tell you how densely, now that I come to think of it, Albertine's life was covered in a network of alternate, fugitive, often contradictory desires. No doubt falsehood complicated this still further, for, as she retained no accurate memory of our conversations, when she had said to me: "Ah! That's a pretty girl, if you like, and a good golfer," and I had asked the girl's name, she had answered with that detached, universal, superior air of which no doubt there is always enough and to spare, for every liar of this category borrows it for a moment when he does not wish to answer a question, and it never fails him: "Ah! That I don't know" (with regret at her inability to enlighten me). "I never knew her name, I used to see her on the golf course, but I didn't know what she was called";—

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

if, a month later, I said to her: "Albertine, you remember that pretty girl you mentioned to me, who plays golf so well," "Ah, yes," she would answer without thinking: "Emilie Daltier, I don't know what has become of her." And the lie, like a line of earthworks, was carried back from the defence of the name, now captured, to the possibilities of meeting her again. "Oh, I can't tell you, I never knew her address. I never see anybody who could tell you. Oh, no! Andrée never knew her. She wasn't one of our little band, now so scattered." At other times the lie took the form of a base admission: "Ah! If I had three hundred thousand francs a year. . . ." She bit her lip. "Well? What would you do then?" "I should ask you," she said, kissing me as she spoke, "to allow me to remain with you always. Where else could I be so happy?" But, even when one took her lies into account, it was incredible how spasmodic her life was, how fugitive her strongest desires. She would be mad about a person whom, three days later, she would refuse to see. She could not wait for an hour while I sent out for canvas and colours, for she wished to start painting again. For two whole days she was impatient, almost shed the tears, quickly dried, of an infant that has just been weaned from its nurse. And this instability of her feelings with regard to people, things, occupations, arts, places, was in fact so universal that, if she did love money, which I do not believe, she cannot have loved it for longer than anything else. When she said: "Ah! If I had three hundred thousand francs a year!" or even if she expressed a bad but very transient thought, she could not have attached herself to it any longer than to the idea

THE CAPTIVE

of going to Les Rochers, of which she had seen an engraving in my grandmother's edition of Mme. de Sévigné, of meeting an old friend from the golf course, of going up in an aeroplane, of going to spend Christmas with her aunt, or of taking up painting again.

We returned home very late one evening while, here and there, by the roadside, a pair of red breeches pressed against a skirt revealed an amorous couple. Our carriage passed in through the Porte Maillot. For the monuments of Paris had been substituted, pure, linear, without depth, a drawing of the monuments of Paris, as though in an attempt to recall the appearance of a city that had been destroyed. But, round about this picture, there stood out so delicately the pale-blue mounting in which it was framed that one's greedy eyes sought everywhere for a further trace of that delicious shade which was too sparingly measured out to them: the moon was shining. Albertine admired the moonlight. I dared not tell her that I would have admired it more if I had been alone, or in quest of a strange woman. I repeated to her poetry or passages of prose about moonlight, pointing out to her how from "silvery" which it had been at one time, it had turned "blue" in Chateaubriand, in the Victor Hugo of *Eviradnus* and *La Fête chez Thérèse*, to become in turn yellow and metallic in Baudelaire and Leconte de Lisle. Then, reminding her of the image that is used for the crescent moon at the end of *Booz endormi*, I repeated the whole of that poem to her. And so we came to the house. The fine weather that night made a leap forwards as the mercury in the thermometer darts upward. In the early-rising mornings of spring that followed, I could hear the tramcars moving, through a cloud of perfumes, in an air

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

with which the prevailing warmth became more and more blended until it reached the solidification and density of noon. When the unctuous air had succeeded in varnishing with it and isolating in it the scent of the wash-stand, the scent of the wardrobe, the scent of the sofa, simply by the sharpness with which, vertical and erect, they stood out in adjacent but distinct slices, in a pearly chiaroscuro which added a softer glaze to the shimmer of the curtains and the blue satin armchairs, I saw myself, not by a mere caprice of my imagination, but because it was physically possible, following in some new quarter of the suburbs, like that in which Bloch's house at Balbec was situated, the streets blinded by the sun, and finding in them not the dull butchers' shops and the white free-stone facings, but the country dining-room which I could reach in no time, and the scents that I would find there on my arrival, that of the bowl of cherries and apricots, the scent of cider, that of gruyère cheese, held in suspense in the luminous congelation of shadow which they delicately vein like the heart of an agate, while the knife-rests of prismatic glass scatter rainbows athwart the room or paint the waxcloth here and there with peacock-eyes. Like a wind that swells in a regular progression, I heard with joy a motor-car beneath the window. I smelt its odour of petrol. It may seem regrettable to the oversensitive (who are always materialists) for whom it spoils the country, and to certain thinkers (materialists after their own fashion also) who, believing in the importance of facts, imagine that man would be happier, capable of higher flights of poetry, if his eyes were able to perceive more colours, his nostrils to distinguish more scents, a philosophical adaptation of the simple thought of those

THE CAPTIVE

who believe that life was finer when men wore, instead of the black coats of to-day, sumptuous costumes. But to me (just as an aroma, unpleasant perhaps in itself, of naphthaline and flowering grasses would have thrilled me by giving me back the blue purity of the sea on the day of my arrival at Balbec), this smell of petrol which, with the smoke from the exhaust of the car, had so often melted into the pale azure, on those scorching days when I used to drive from Saint-Jean de la Haise to Gourville, as it had accompanied me on my excursions during those summer afternoons when I had left Albertine painting, called into blossom now on either side of me, for all that I was lying in my darkened bedroom, cornflowers, poppies and red clover, intoxicated me like a country scent, not circumscribed and fixed, like that which is spread before the hawthorns and, retained in its unctuous and dense elements, floats with a certain stability before the hedge, but like a scent before which the roads took flight, the sun's face changed, castles came hurrying to meet me, the sky turned pale, force was increased tenfold, a scent which was like a symbol of elastic motion and power, and which revived the desire that I had felt at Balbec, to enter the cage of steel and crystal, but this time not to go any longer on visits to familiar houses with a woman whom I knew too well, but to make love in new places with a woman unknown. A scent that was accompanied at every moment by the horns of passing motors, which I set to words like a military call: "Parisian, get up, get up, come out and picnic in the country, and take a boat on the river, under the trees, with a pretty girl; get up, get up!" And all these musings were so agreeable that I congratulated myself upon the "stern decree" which

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

prescribed that until I should have rung my bell, no "timid mortal", whether Françoise or Albertine, should dream of coming in to disturb me "within this palace" where

". . . a terrible
Majesty makes me all invisible
To my subjects."

But all of a sudden the scene changed; it was the memory, no longer of old impressions, but of an old desire, quite recently reawakened by the Fortuny gown in blue and gold, that spread itself before me, another spring, a spring not leafy at all but suddenly stripped, on the contrary, of its trees and flowers by the name that I had just uttered to myself: "Venice", a decanted spring, which is reduced to its essential qualities, and expresses the lengthening, the warming, the gradual maturing of its days by the progressive fermentation, not (this time) of an impure soil, but of a blue and virgin water, springlike without bud or blossom, which could answer the call of May only by gleaming facets, carved by that month, harmonising exactly with it in the radiant, unaltering nakedness of its dusky sapphire. And so, no more than the seasons to its unflowering inlets of the sea, do modern years bring any change to the gothic city; I knew it, I could not imagine it, but this was what I longed to contemplate with the same desire which long ago, when I was a boy, in the very ardour of my departure had shattered the strength necessary for the journey; I wished to find myself face to face with my Venetian imaginings, to behold how that divided sea enclosed in its meanderings, like the streams of Ocean, an urbane and refined civilisation, but one that, isolated by their azure belt, had devel-

THE CAPTIVE

oped by itself, had had its own schools of painting and architecture, to admire that fabulous garden of fruits and birds in coloured stone, flowering in the midst of the sea which kept it refreshed, splashed with its tide against the base of the columns and, on the bold relief of the capitals, like a dark blue eye watching in the shadows, laid patches, which it kept perpetually moving, of light. Yes, I must go, the time had come. Now that Albertine no longer appeared to be cross with me, the possession of her no longer seemed to me a treasure in exchange for which we are prepared to sacrifice every other. For we should have done so only to rid ourself of a grief, an anxiety which were now appeased. We have succeeded in jumping through the calico hoop through which we thought for a moment that we should never be able to pass. We have lightened the storm, brought back the serenity of the smile. The agonising mystery of a hatred without any known cause, and perhaps without end, is dispelled. Henceforward we find ourself once more face to face with the problem, momentarily thrust aside, of a happiness which we know to be impossible. Now that life with Albertine had become possible once again, I felt that I could derive nothing from it but misery, since she did not love me; better to part from her in the pleasant moment of her consent which I should prolong in memory. Yes, this was the moment; I must make quite certain of the date on which Andrée was leaving Paris, use all my influence with Mme. Bontemps to make sure that at that moment Albertine should not be able to go either to Holland or to Montjouvain. It would fall to our lot, were we better able to analyse our loves, to see that often women rise in our estimation only because of the dead

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

weight of men with whom we have to compete for them, although we can hardly bear the thought of that competition; the counterpoise removed, the charm of the woman declines. We have a painful and salutary example of this in the predilection that men feel for the women who, before coming to know them, have gone astray, for those women whom they feel to be sinking in perilous quicksands and whom they must spend the whole period of their love in rescuing; a posthumous example, on the other hand, and one that is not at all dramatic, in the man who, conscious of a decline in his affection for the woman whom he loves, spontaneously applies the rules that he has deduced, and, to make sure of his not ceasing to love the woman, places her in a dangerous environment from which he is obliged to protect her daily. (The opposite of the men who insist upon a woman's retiring from the stage even when it was because of her being upon the stage that they fell in love with her.)

When in this way there could be no objection to Albertine's departure, I should have to choose a fine day like this—and there would be plenty of them before long—one on which she would have ceased to matter to me, on which I should be tempted by countless desires, I should have to let her leave the house without my seeing her, then, rising from my bed, making all my preparations in haste, leave a note for her, taking advantage of the fact that as she could not for the time being go to any place the thought of which would upset me, I might be spared, during my travels, from imagining the wicked things that she was perhaps doing—which for that matter seemed to me at the moment to be quite unimportant—and, without seeing her again, might leave for Venice.

THE CAPTIVE

I rang for Françoise to ask her to buy me a guide-book and a time-table, as I had done as a boy, when I wished to prepare in advance a journey to Venice, the realisation of a desire as violent as that which I felt at this moment; I forgot that, in the interval, there was a desire which I had attained, without any satisfaction, the desire for Balbec, and that Venice, being also a visible phenomenon, was probably no more able than Balbec to realise an ineffable dream, that of the gothic age, made actual by a springtime sea, and coming at moments to stir my soul with an enchanted, caressing, unseizable, mysterious, confused image. Françoise having heard my ring came into the room, in considerable uneasiness as to how I would receive what she had to say and what she had done. "It has been most awkward," she said to me, "that Monsieur is so late in ringing this morning. I didn't know what I ought to do. This morning at eight o'clock Mademoiselle Albertine asked me for her trunks, I dared not refuse her, I was afraid of Monsieur's scolding me if I came and waked him. It was no use my putting her through her catechism, telling her to wait an hour because I expected all the time that Monsieur would ring; she wouldn't have it, she left this letter with me for Monsieur, and at nine o'clock off she went." Then—so ignorant may we be of what we have within us, since I was convinced of my own indifference to Albertine—my breath was cut short, I gripped my heart in my hands suddenly moistened by a perspiration which I had not known since the revelation that my mistress had made on the little tram with regard to Mlle. Vinteuil's friend, without my being able to say anything else than: "Ah! Very good, you did quite right not to wake me, leave me now for a little, I shall ring for you presently."





Michel -

Leiden-vener,

Ac 3707 Mo 83 v8

J	P	J	P	J	P
26	3	30	34	21	24
56	37	57	58		39
77	61		73		51
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	88		122		1✓
	125		252		100
			51		200
	30		201		7
	255				219
	77				201
	188				188
					608
					132
31	2	21	34	5	24
52	38	26	60	66	40
57	62	87	76	78	78
118			34		88
			114		
226			227		114
62			87		226
68			737		78
137					137
31					124

